

complicated undoing a major law can be. With summer just around the corner, and most of official Washington swept up in scandals surrounding Trump, the health overhaul delays are starting to back up the rest of the 2018 agenda. (Rovner, 5/22)

Roll Call: New Mail Campaign Highlights AHCA Impact On Older Voters

Older voters in two GOP districts are the targets of a new direct mail campaign highlighting higher costs for seniors under the GOP health care bill. The liberal advocacy group Save My Care is launching a direct mail campaign this weekend aimed at 30,000 voters between the ages of 50 and 64 in Arizona's 2nd District, home to Rep. Martha McSally, and Nevada's 2nd District, represented by Rep. Mark Amodei. (Bowman, 5/19)

And in the states —

Boston Globe: Baker Asks US Senate Not To Undermine Massachusetts' Success
Republican Governor Charlie Baker is again warning that House GOP efforts to restructure the American health care system would hurt Massachusetts... The Baker administration opposed the House-passed health measure, which aims to repeal and replace president Barack Obama's overhaul. (Miller, 5/19)

Denver Post: Effort To Repeal Obamacare Tests Colorado's Cory Gardner

Three years after running on a pledge to repeal the Affordable Care Act, U.S. Sen. Cory Gardner of Colorado has a chance to do just that — having been named to a 13-member team of Senate Republicans tasked with dismantling the massive health care law. But Gardner isn't approaching the assignment with the same kind of public gusto seen in lawmakers such as U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, who has advocated for a strategy that would pull out all the stops to repeal Obamacare. Instead, Gardner has kept a lower profile — a reflection of both his policy goals and the political peril that comes with undoing President Barack Obama's signature law. (Matthews, 5/22)

Nashville Tennessean: If Obamacare Is Repealed, Tennessee Faces A Big Decision

Two weeks ago, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the American Health Care Act (AHCA). It is now in front of the Senate. If it ultimately becomes law, Tennessee will have a big decision to make as a state. The decision relates to how Tennessee wants to approach two insurance regulations that have garnered a lot of controversy ever since Obamacare was passed. The AHCA would give Tennessee the ability to "opt out" of them. Many predict that this option will be "front and center" in Tennessee and all 49 other states if it becomes a reality. (Tolbert, 5/21)

9. Georgia Appears To Dodge A Bullet As Blue Cross Doesn't Signal Plans To Pull Back Operations

In its initial filings with the state, the company says it will continue to sell individual policies in all 159 counties. In other news, a New Hampshire paper reports indications that premiums could go up significantly and California Healthline examines which companies are enticing customers on that exchange.

Atlanta Journal-Constitution: Blue Cross Blue Shield May Stay In Georgia Obamacare Market

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia, the only remaining company to serve all 159 counties in the state, has filed its annual plans for next year's insurance market exchange under the Affordable Care Act. In its initial filing, it filed plans for the entire state, said spokeswoman Debbie Diamond. The decision can still change. Negotiations between insurers and the state will continue for several months. (Hart, 5/19)

Georgia Health News: Blue Cross Signals It's Sticking With Georgia Exchange For '18
Blue Cross' parent company, Anthem, had recently indicated that it was leaning toward exiting a high number of regions in the nation next year, according to a research report. If that had included Georgia, it could have created a vacuum in many areas. This year, Blue Cross is the only exchange health insurer in 96 of the 159 counties. (Miller, 5/19)

NH Union Leader: Obamacare Rate Could See Big Spike In NH Next Year

Some Obamacare exchange premiums could increase an average of 44 percent next year in New Hampshire due in large part to Medicaid expansion and the opioid and mental health crises, according to a document obtained by the New Hampshire Union Leader. The document -- stamped "Confidential" and marked "Draft Only" and "not for distribution" -- hints that New Hampshire soon could be hit with health-care premium increases it has not experienced since Obamacare coverage started in January 2014. Provided by a government official, the document appears to be written by an insurance carrier to explain the expected double-digit increase. (Hayward, 5/20)

California Healthline: Blue Shield Has Highest Share Of Enrollees In Covered California
Blue Shield of California has the largest number of enrollees in the Covered California health insurance exchange, widening its lead over rivals Anthem Blue Cross and Kaiser Permanente, according to recently released data. The data, from Covered California, show that Blue Shield had 389,480 enrollees in the exchange as of December 2016, about 31 percent of the market. Anthem was next with 310,690 members, for a 25 percent share. Kaiser Permanente was third with 297,030 exchange enrollees, or 24

percent. Health Net and Molina Healthcare were fourth and fifth, respectively. (Terhune and Bazar, 5/22)

WOMEN'S HEALTH

10. Texas Lawmakers Pass Strict Abortion Bill, Shifting Priority From Protecting Mother To Protecting Fetus

The legislation bans a commonly used procedure for second-trimester abortions, similar to laws that courts have blocked in other states. And Missouri asks an appellate court to step in over a judge's decision to block the state's abortion restrictions.

Texas Tribune: Texas House Approves New Abortion Restrictions

GOP House lawmakers took a sweeping approach to anti-abortion legislation on Friday, giving an initial OK to a measure that would ban the most common form of second-trimester procedure and change how health care providers dispose of fetal remains. Under the broad strokes of Senate Bill 8, any health care facility, including hospitals and abortion clinics, would have to bury or cremate any fetal remains whether from abortion, miscarriage or stillbirth, and they would be banned from donating aborted fetal tissue to medical researchers. (Evans, 5/19)

The Associated Press: Texas House Approves New Limits On Abortion

Texas' Republican-controlled Legislature has advanced tough new limits on abortion, hitting back at a United States Supreme Court decision last summer that struck down most of the sweeping restrictions on the procedure that the state approved four years ago. (5/20)

Austin American-Statesman: Texas House Votes To Expand Abortion Regulations

After almost six hours of sometimes heated, sometimes tearful debate Friday, the Texas House approved legislation that would greatly expand abortion regulations in Texas. Senate Bill 8 would require abortion clinics and health centers to ensure that fetal tissue from abortions and miscarriages to be buried or cremated, with the ashes properly scattered — similar to a state agency rule that a federal judge voided earlier this year for limiting access to abortion without offering any health benefits. (Lindell, 5/19)

The Associated Press: Missouri Appeals Judge's Blocking Of Abortion Restrictions

Missouri is asking a federal appellate court to put on hold a judge's order blocking abortion-restricting rules in the state, arguing the judge "categorically refused even to consider the state's evidence justifying its regulations." (Suhr, 5/19)

Meanwhile, in news about Planned Parenthood —

The Washington Post: Planned Parenthood To Close 10 Health Centers Across Midwest, Southwest

Planned Parenthood affiliates announced the closures of 10 health centers across the Midwest and Southwest this week, citing a variety of reasons including political attacks by antiabortion lawmakers. Planned Parenthood of the Heartland said it planned to close four clinics across Iowa because of the recent budget signed into law by Gov. Terry Branstad, who pledged to “defund” the women’s health organization. (Somashekhar, 5/19)

Denver Post: Planned Parenthood Will Close Clinics In Longmont And Parker, Blames Obamacare

Planned Parenthood says it will close clinics in Longmont, Parker and four others in the region, citing a tough financial landscape in the reproductive health care field due to effects of the Affordable Care Act. ... “They would come in and get a pap smear and pay out of pocket,” [spokeswoman Whitney] Phillips said. “Under the ACA, a lot of patients were given the opportunity to be on Medicaid. Again, that’s wonderful, but it meant that rather than bill them directly, we had to bill Medicaid. And Medicaid reimburses at a very low rate.” D (Antonacci, 5/19)

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Atlanta Journal-Constitution: Georgia 6th: Ossoff Slams Handel’s ‘Nonsense’ Planned Parenthood Stance

Democrat Jon Ossoff held a roundtable Friday with women’s health advocates and breast cancer survivors as his campaign stepped up the attack on Republican Karen Handel’s stint at a breast-cancer charity. A split on abortion is one of the starkest contrasts between the two candidates in the nationally-watched June 20 runoff to represent suburban Atlanta’s 6th District. (Bluestein, 5/19)

Roll Call: Sparring Over Women’s Health In Georgia’s 6th District

As the June 20 runoff election in Georgia’s 6th district approaches, Democrat Jon Ossoff and Republican Karen Handel are facing off with competing ads on women’s health and anti-abortion groups have joined in the fight. Ossoff’s broadcast cable ad, released Tuesday, features an ob-gyn doctor criticizing Handel for her move to “cut off funding for Planned Parenthood cancer screenings when she was an executive at Susan G. Komen.” Handel, then senior vice president of public policy at Susan G. Komen Foundation, spearheaded the organization’s decision to stop funding cancer

screenings at Planned Parenthood. When the foundation overturned that decision, Handel resigned. (Raman, 5/19)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

11. Hospital Sepsis Protocols Can Increase Survival Chances, Study Finds

Many doctors have been skeptical about proposed regulations for screening and treating the life-threatening complication that afflicts tens of thousands of Americans.

Stat: Doctors Have Resisted Guidelines To Treat Sepsis. New Study Suggests Those Guidelines Save Lives

Even in the face of increased pressure from regulators, many doctors have failed to fully embrace early screening and treatment protocols for sepsis, an infection-related complication that afflicts tens of thousands of Americans every year and that can be life-threatening. Skeptics have argued that there haven't been any comprehensive studies to support the notion that the protocols can actually save lives. On Sunday, however, the New England Journal of Medicine published a large study that could make doctors reconsider — and help hospitals address head-on one of the most common dangers their patients face. (Tedeschi, 5/21)

USA Today: 'Rory's Regulations' On Sepsis Require Hospital Checklists, Save Lives, Report Shows

New York regulations named after a 12-year-old victim of sepsis increased the chance of survival from the potentially deadly condition, a study out Sunday shows. "Rory's Regulations," named for the late Rory Staunton of New York City, requires hospitals to quickly perform a checklist of safety measures when people show up at hospitals with sepsis. A report in the New England Journal of Medicine Sunday found the faster hospitals completed the checklist of care and administered antibiotics, the lower the risk of death in hospitals from sepsis. With each additional hour it took, the risk of death increased 4%. (O'Donnell, 5/21)

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12. Carfentanil Intensifying Already Deadly Opioid Epidemic

The synthetic drug is 10,000 times more potent than morphine.

The Star Tribune: 5 More Carfentanil-Related ODs Confirmed By Hennepin County Medical Examiner

Five more people have died from overdoses related to the powerful drug carfentanil, bringing the total to 10 deaths in Minnesota, the Hennepin County medical examiner confirmed Friday... Carfentanil, a powerful opioid new to the state, is said to be 10,000 times more potent than morphine and 100 times more potent than fentanyl, another synthetic opioid. (Chanen, 5/19)

NH Times Union: Manchester Officials Gather To Battle Carfentanil

Leaders in law enforcement, government, health care, public health, addiction recovery and emergency services huddled Friday over the lessons learned and the challenges that lie ahead following the carnage the new drug, carfentanil, caused in Manchester last month. Catholic Medical Center President and CEO Joe Pepe said his emergency room dealt with 10 overdoses in a single day, and in some cases overdoses required five times the usual dose of Narcan used to revive an unconscious addict. (Landrigan, 5/19)

In other news on the crisis —

NPR: Poll: Doctors Are Prescribing Back Pain Treatments That May Do More Harm Than Good

More than half of people say they've suffered lower back pain in the past year, according to the latest NPR-Truven Health Analytics Health Poll. That's not a surprise; low back pain is very common, and one of the biggest reasons that people seek medical care. But people told us that they're making very different choices in how they treat that pain, with some stark differences among age groups and income levels. (Shute, 5/19)

The Associated Press: Philadelphia To Mull Safe Injection Sites In Opioid Fight

A task force charged with outlining ways for Philadelphia to combat its opioid epidemic has recommended the city consider allowing safe sites, where drug users could inject heroin. Gov. Tom Wolf was on hand Friday as Mayor Jim Kenney outlined the task force's findings. Kenney convened the 23-member group in January. (de Groot, 5/19)

The Washington Post: A Devastating Story Of Lives Ruined And Ended By Opioids

America's opioid crisis is starkly laid out in the opening moments of HBO Documentary Films' "Warning: This Drug May Kill You." There's a guy slumped over on a bus. A woman passed out on a street. Another guy collapsed backward across a bench. Then there's a doctor, in a Perdue Pharma promotional video from 1999, explaining that "we doctors were wrong in thinking that opioids cannot be used long-term. They can be. And they should be." (Hallett, 5/20)

13. Pediatricians: Babies Shouldn't Drink Juice In First Year Of Life

The doctors want to battle the misconception that children need the sugary drinks.

The New York Times: Pediatricians Say No Fruit Juice In Child's First Year

The nation's top pediatricians are advising parents to stop giving fruit juice to children in the first year of life, saying the drink is not as healthful as many parents think. In the past, the American Academy of Pediatrics had advised parents to avoid 100 percent fruit juice for babies younger than 6 months. On Monday, the group toughened its stance against juice, recommending that the drink be banned entirely from a baby's diet during the first year. (Saint Louis, 5/22)

NPR: No Fruit Juice Until Kids Are One, Doctors Recommend

"We want to reinforce that the most recent evidence supports that fruit juice should be a limited part of the diet of children," says Steven Abrams, a professor of pediatrics at Dell Medical School at the University of Texas at Austin, and an author of the guidelines, which were published Monday in Pediatrics. (Hobson, 5/22)

14. Dwindling Supply Of Vital But Simple Drug Setting Hospitals On Edge

Because of the shortage, doctors are having to make tough decisions on how they treat their patients. "Does the immediate need of a patient outweigh the expected need of a patient?" one asked. "It's a medical and ethical question that goes beyond anything I've had to experience before." In other public health news: infertility, pumping breast milk, services for deaf patients, neuroscience, probiotics and more.

The New York Times: A Vital Drug Runs Low, Though Its Base Ingredient Is In Many Kitchens

Hospitals around the country are scrambling to stockpile vials of a critical drug — even postponing operations or putting off chemotherapy treatments — because the country's only two suppliers have run out. The medicine? Sodium bicarbonate solution. Yes, baking soda. (Thomas, 5/21)

NPR: Scientists May Someday Fight Infertility With 3-D Printed Ovaries

The list of things that can be created with 3-D printers keeps getting longer: jewelry, art, guns, food, medical devices and, now, mouse ovaries. Scientists have used a 3-D printer to create a mouse ovary capable of producing healthy offspring. And

researchers hope to create replacement human ovaries the same way someday. (Stein, 5/20)

The Washington Post: Unable To Pump Breast Milk On The Job, Airline Employees Turn To Dirty Closets And Bathrooms

In the months after her daughter was born, Jo Roby faced a serious dilemma: She wanted to provide her infant daughter with breast milk, but Frontier Airlines — where she'd worked as a flight attendant for more than a decade — forbids employees from pumping breast milk during flights. To avoid health complications and keep her daughter supplied with milk, Roby, who lives in Boise, Idaho, needed to be able to pump every three or four hours. But long, 10-hour days in the air with unpredictable flight schedules made that goal nearly impossible. (Holley, 5/19)

Stat: Deaf Patients Struggle To Get Adequate Interpretation Services In ERs

It's challenging for hospitals to provide interpreters to the myriad patients and family members who speak different languages, from Spanish to sign language. On-site interpreters can be costly and hard to arrange, so hospitals have sought out alternatives, including video conferencing with remote interpreters, who can be helping a patient in Ohio one minute and in Oregon the next. Many deaf patients have taken to social media to complain about the use of video interpreting services in emergency rooms. Numerous patients tell stories about a blurry video feed and describe having to set up the video interpreting service themselves when nurses don't know how to operate the equipment, or being unable to focus on a small screen in a crowded room. (Miller, 5/22)

NPR: The Curious Case Of Phineas Gage's Brain

It took an explosion and 13 pounds of iron to usher in the modern era of neuroscience. In 1848, a 25-year-old railroad worker named Phineas Gage was blowing up rocks to clear the way for a new rail line in Cavendish, Vt. He would drill a hole, place an explosive charge, then pack in sand using a 13-pound metal bar known as a tamping iron. (Hamilton, 5/21)

The Washington Post: People Love Probiotics, But Do They Really Help?

Probiotics are having a moment. They're touted as the next big superstar in disease prevention and in treatment for ailments such as irritable bowel syndrome, gestational diabetes, allergies and obesity. Fans claim that these "good" bacteria will nourish your gut microbiome and crowd out the "bad" microbes. As a result, you'll experience better digestion, a healthier immune system and a sunnier mood. (Yu, 5/20)

NPR: Tips For Healthy Foreign Travel, From Pink Pills To Apps

When planning a summer trip abroad, it's easy to think, "Oh, I'll just hop over to a travel clinic, and they'll tell me everything I need to know — and do — to keep from getting sick." But that's not always the case. (Douceff, 5/22)

Orlando Sentinel: Zika Update: USF, Sanford Burnham Publish New Findings

Earlier this month, scientists at University of South Florida and Stanford University reported that mosquito-borne diseases like Zika can spread at lower temperatures than previously thought. By studying models of Zika outbreak in South and Central America, researchers found that the virus's transmission is highest around 84 degrees, and not 90 degrees as previously thought. (Miller, 5/19)

Columbus Dispatch: Virtual-Reality Game Helps Young Hemophilia Patients Endure Prickly Treatments

The calming effect came from a virtual-reality gaming system created to help pediatric hemophilia patients deal with the needles they face, sometimes as often as three times a week... The device, a disposable cardboard shell that holds a cellphone, slips over a patient's eyes, providing a virtual-reality experience. Children, who need to hold their arms still while an IV line is placed, control game play with a movement of the head or by breathing into a sensor. (Viviano, 5/21)

The Baltimore Sun: Advocates Criticize 'Everything, Everything' Movie For Misinforming Public On Immune Disorders

The illness the movie features is severe combined immune deficiency, or SCID, but became better known as the "bubble boy" disease in the 1970s after the first in a series of shows based on a Texas boy forced to live germ free to prevent deadly infections...The romantic drama is the latest film to draw criticism for taking liberties with medical facts, misrepresenting disorders or portraying science incorrectly or even negatively. Advocates say such movies are not just missed opportunities to explain rare illnesses like SCID, they are hurtful and potentially harmful. (Cohn, 5/19)

STATE WATCH

15. Merger Would Make Steward Health Care The Largest Private For-Profit Hospital Operator

Boston-based Steward Health Care System announces that it will acquire Franklin, Tenn.-based IASIS Healthcare for \$2 billion.

Boston Globe: Steward Health Care Merges With Tenn. Hospital System
Steward Health Care System, founded almost seven years ago to rescue a group of struggling Massachusetts hospitals, is making its biggest move yet to become a national player in the competitive for-profit hospital industry. Steward on Friday announced a nearly \$2 billion deal with IASIS Healthcare of Franklin, Tenn., which would make it the largest private for-profit hospital operator in the country. (Dayal McCluskey, 5/19)

WBUR: With Latest Acquisition, Steward Set To Become Largest U.S. For-Profit Hospital Operator
Boston-based Steward Health Care said Friday it will become the largest private for-profit hospital operator in the United States after it buys a Tennessee-based health care company. First reported by The Wall Street Journal, Steward will acquire IASIS Healthcare for \$1.9 billion, according to a source familiar with the transaction. (Zimmerman and Cain, 5/19)

16. State Highlights: Texas Vaccination Bill Concerns Doctors; Major Reforms Sought In Iowa After Deaths Of Teens In Foster Care

Media outlets report on news from Virginia, Texas, California, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Georgia, Florida, Ohio and Wisconsin.

The Associated Press: Doctors Worry As Texas Lawmakers OK Vaccine Restrictions
Texas moved closer Friday to restricting emergency immunizations given to children removed from troubled homes, worrying doctors and handing a political victory for vaccination opponents in a state where the number of families forgoing shots is soaring. (5/19)

Texas Tribune: Senate Passes Religious Protections For Child Welfare Agencies
Texas senators voted 21-10 on Sunday to give child welfare providers protection from legal retaliation if they assert their "sincerely held religious beliefs" while caring for abused and neglected children in foster or Child Protective Services custody. House Bill 3859 would allow faith-based organizations to place a child in a religion-based school; deny referrals for abortion-related contraceptives, drugs or devices; and refuse to contract with other organizations that don't share their religious beliefs. (Evans, 5/21)

Des Moines Register: 'Heartbroken' Iowa Agency Asks Experts How To Prevent Child Deaths

Two of the girls died after becoming extremely malnourished. The third ran away, fearing for her life. Advocates for home-schooling parents will tell you that such cases

are rare, and statistics back them up. Just one of the 20 Iowa children who died in preventable deaths last year was home-schooled: 16-year-old Natalie, Reader's Watchdog found. But revelations about the suffering of the three teens — and other cases nationally — have prompted Iowa legislators and advocates for children to call for major state reforms. Some want to bolster screening of potential foster and adoptive parents, as well as home-schoolers, to provide a better safety net. (Rood, 5/20)

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Sacramento Bee: CA Nursing Board Quits Education Audit

A California licensing board curtailed a massive audit of nursing credentials that it launched late last year, choosing not to finish a project that threatened to overwhelm the small department. The Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians reviewed just 15 percent of the education records it demanded from more than 52,000 nurses and mental health workers last November before it elected to end the audit. (Ashton, 5/19)

Richmond Times-Dispatch: Virginia Ranks Best In Country For Early Elective Delivery Rates

As of the end of 2016, Virginia had the lowest rate of early elective deliveries in the country, according to federal government data. The state's rate was 1.3 percent, compared with the nationwide rate of 2 percent. An early elective delivery is an induction or cesarean section delivery between 37 and 39 weeks that is not medically necessary. (O'Connor, 5/20)

KCUR: Kansas City Health Organizations Launch Collaborative Health Science District
Some of Kansas City's largest health organizations announced on Friday the launch of a collaboration centered on Hospital Hill. The "UMKC Health Sciences District" includes the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine, Truman Medical Centers, Children's Mercy Hospital and the Kansas City, Missouri, Health Department, among other partners. At an event that included the signing of the collaborative agreement, institution and civic leaders highlighted the value of having so many health providers, educational institutions and local city health organization within a few blocks of each other working together. (Smith, 5/19)

The Star Tribune: Harmless Measles? Minn. Officials Want Parents To Know It's A Deadly Virus

State health officials are underscoring the point as they reach out to parents who are skeptical of the measles vaccine. Some have accepted the discredited theory that the vaccine causes autism — and they reason that autism is serious while measles is not.

In fact, measles' impact on children, even after they recover, can last for years. (Howatt and Mahamud, 5/20)

WABE: New Program Teaches Ga. Educators Youth Suicide Warning Signs
The Georgia Bureau of Investigation's Child Fatality Review Program teamed up with state education and health officials to create a new training program for school personnel. The program focuses on teaching educators warning signs in students and figuring out way to get the issue of suicide out in the open at their schools. (Hawkins, 5/19)

Health News Florida: 'Explosion' Of Salt Marsh Mosquitoes Swarms Collier County
High winds contributed to spreading the pestilential bugs 30 to 40 miles inland. The Collier County Mosquito Control District received reports of clouds of the pests a dozen miles off shore. The salt marsh mosquito species doesn't transmit the Zika virus, but can pose a threat to pets as a vector of dog heartworm. (Smith, 5/21)

Sacramento Bee: California Democrats Shout Down Tom Perez
State Democrats' three-day convention had a raucous start Friday, as liberal activists booed and heckled Democratic National Committee Chair Tom Perez after marching from the state Capitol to promote a universal health care program. The leader of the nurses' union that opposed Perez's recent election had just warned California Democrats that they would put up primary election challengers against lawmakers if they don't support a bill to create public-funded, universal healthcare. (Cadelago and Hart, 5/19)

Richmond Times-Dispatch: Chesterfield-Based Care Advantage Acquires Stay At Home Personal Care Service Offices
Care Advantage, a Chesterfield County-based provider of home health care services in Virginia, announced Friday that it has acquired Stay at Home Personal Care, a subsidiary of Charlottesville-based Commonwealth Senior Living. Stay at Home operates three locations, one each in Norfolk, Hampton and Christiansburg, providing in-home, nonskilled personal-care services. (Hazard, 5/19)

Cleveland Plain Dealer: The Gender Pay Gap Is Alive And Well In Cleveland Healthcare
Cleveland has the 18th greatest gender wage gap in the country. Here, female physicians are paid 27 percent - or \$92,320 - less than their male counterparts, according to a recent study by Doximity, a social network for physicians. Female physicians in Cleveland earn an average annual wage of \$246,210, while men make \$338,530. (Christ, 5/19)

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Milwaukee's Infant Mortality Numbers Improve But The Racial Disparity Is Still Wide

The call to arms was first sounded in 2004, when the Wisconsin Medical Journal reported that Wisconsin's black infant mortality rate had collapsed from the third best in the nation to the second worst. Most of those babies — 77% — died in Milwaukee...The new FIMR shows that by 2016, the African-American rate had dropped to 13.6 deaths per 1,000 live births, which places Milwaukee on par with Detroit, Dallas and Minneapolis. (Stephenson, 5/20)

Tampa Bay Times: Entrepreneurs Aren't Waiting For Lawmakers To Plan The Future Of Medical Cannabis

The revolution started last year in Florida, when voters passed Amendment 2, a constitutional amendment designed to expand medical marijuana legalization beyond the limited use allowed under the Compassionate Use Act. But before departing Tallahassee earlier this month, the Florida Legislature failed to pass rules regulating marijuana's medical use. Negotiations over regulations that are needed to implement the amendment stalled because of disagreements on the number of dispensaries each marijuana grower would be allowed to open. (Solomon, 5/19)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

17. Thoughts On Health Reform: Decision On Subsidies Due Today; Protect Kids In Medicaid

Opinion writers reflect on changes for the nation's health care system.

Los Angeles Times: The Entire Healthcare Industry Is Panicking That Trump Is About To Blow Up Obamacare

Organizations representing most of the healthcare industry — along with attorneys general from 15 states and the District of Columbia — took desperate steps Friday in a last-ditch attempt to keep President Trump from blowing up the Affordable Care Act. ... Monday is a crucial deadline. On that day, the Trump administration has to tell a federal appeals court whether it will continue to defend the ACA against a legal attack by the House of Representatives. (Michael Hiltzik, 5/20)

The Hill: Keep Kids Off The Negotiating Table In Medicaid Reform

Discussions around repealing the Affordable Care Act are now taking place in the Senate, and Medicaid will once again be in the spotlight. That could spell trouble for the nation's children. There will be new ideas, extended discussions and ultimately negotiations that try to improve our healthcare system. But while we applaud discourse

and debate, and encourage our elected officials to weigh the pros and cons of all proposals, we have a simple request — as you debate Medicaid, protect children. (Irwin Redlener and Dennis Walto, 5/20)

San Antonio Express-News: Who Has Absolute Health Care Moral Authority?

As ever, absolute moral authority only belongs to those who preach civility and compassion for others -- while ramming their own policy preferences and values down our throats. Millions of us who wanted our individual market health insurance plans left alone were branded selfish or liars for the past eight years. Our stories were stifled; our cancellation notices derided; our accounts of skyrocketing health insurance costs and diminished access to doctors mocked. (Michelle Malkin, 5/20)

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Richmond Times-Dispatch: Better, Less Expensive Health Care Requires That We Reframe The Debate

The divisive debate over federal health care legislation incorrectly assumes that health care is like a balloon — squeeze one side and the air pops out someplace else... It is possible to reduce spending by increasing medical practice that is guided by evidence-based medicine, by both increasing high-value care and reducing the considerable amount of care that evidence shows us is often of no or low value. (Beth A. Bortz, 5/19)

Miami Herald: 'With Friends Like This, I Could Get Myself Unelected!'

An oddly timed political commercial has been appearing on West Palm Beach television stations, aimed at voters in Florida's 18th congressional district. The ad urges people to call Rep. Brian Mast and thank him for courageously standing with President Trump and working to repeal Obamacare. ... Obviously, the last thing Brian Mast needs right now is for everyone living in his district to be reminded over and over that he voted for a healthcare law that would bankrupt lots of sick people and abandon others. So it made perfect sense that the Democrats would launch the "thank Brian Mast" commercials, just to punk the freshman congressman. Not so. Incredibly, the ads are real. (Carl Hiaasen, 5/19)

18. Viewpoints: Problems In The Meat Industry; Trump's 'Global Gag Rule'; Opioid Fight Stumbles

A selection of opinions on health care from around the country.

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The New York Times: Health Leaders Must Focus On The Threats From Factory Farms
This week, the World Health Organization — which works globally to improve human health — will meet in Geneva to select a new director general. We have a mission for that leader: take on factory farms, a major threat to health and the environment. Starting just after World War II, animal production in the United States became increasingly industrialized. ... worldwide, meat production has tripled over the last four decades and increased 20 percent in just the last 10 years, according to research by the Worldwatch Institute, an environmental research group. This sweeping change in meat production and consumption has had grave consequences for our health and environment, and these problems will grow only worse if current trends continue. (Scott Weathers, Sophie Hermanns and Mark Bittman, 5/21)

Los Angeles Times: Trump's New Global Gag Rule Will Devastate Healthcare In Poor Countries

It is not surprising but it is deeply depressing that the Trump administration is reviving the “global gag rule” = 2 so called because it bans U.S. financial assistance to non-governmental healthcare organizations in foreign countries if they provide abortions or even utter the word to their patients in counseling them or referring them elsewhere. ... The rule was bad enough in its earlier form, when it barred aid to family planning organizations that offered abortion or abortion counseling. ... But the new Trump administration incarnation of the rule is far more expansive. (5/22)

The New York Times: Donald Trump Vs. Women's Health

When video surfaced last fall of Donald Trump boasting about sexual assault, outrage erupted. But if Trump's words about women were offensive, his policies are incomparably more consequential — and may cost more lives than in any other area of his governance. Yes, the phrase “war on women” may seem hyperbolic, but it also reflects the devastating impact of Trump's policies on women's health. One danger is that we're so focused on the battles at the White House that we neglect the administration's policy impact at the grass roots — on, say, women who will die unnecessarily all over the world from cervical cancer. (Nicholas Kristof, 5/20)

Modern Healthcare: Trump Administration Undermines Own Efforts To Fight Opioid Addiction With Crippling Budget Cuts

As with so much else, the Trump administration has stumbled in its initial efforts to combat opioid addiction. Given the magnitude of the crisis, healthcare professionals have an obligation to speak out against ill-considered policies. ... Citizens of all political persuasions have cried out for a comprehensive approach to this scourge. Not only must the healthcare system reckon with its misguided approach to treating pain, policymakers must address the reality that the worst of the addiction crisis is being felt

in communities experiencing economic decline, poverty, violence and despair. (Merrill Goozner, 5/20)

Stat: Anti-Vaccine Activists Are Playing With Fire In Minnesota

"They are everywhere. Like, every event, every forum." This is how anti-vaccine activists were described by a community outreach worker in Minneapolis, where the Somali-American population was systematically and incessantly warned against vaccines. ... The campaign led to an increase in mistrust of vaccines, particularly measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine, among Somali-American parents, as well as dangerously low vaccination rates — 41 percent among 24-to-35-month-olds, according to one estimate. You don't have to be an epidemiologist like me to comprehend the consequences of such drastic drops in vaccination rates. (Saad Omer, 5/19)

The New York Times: Who Should You Listen To On Abortion? People Who've Had Them

The need to terminate a pregnancy knows no political affiliation or religious faith. I've hugged, cried with and held the hands of hundreds of people who've had abortions, many of whom never thought they would. All were thankful that someone was there to provide care, sit with them when they were alone and hold their hair as the nausea took over. All felt the stigma and shame society thrusts on them. The abortion debate rages on, but the voices of those who've actually had abortions are ignored. Few people try to understand our lives. And we are never asked the most simple but important question: Why did you do it? (Renee Bracey Sherman, 5/20)

Los Angeles Times: Does A Woman's Right To Choose Apply To Breastfeeding?

For my generation, breastfeeding has become the ultimate status symbol. I could not possibly count the number of times I was asked while pregnant if I intended to breastfeed my child. ... Though I probably will never be asked if I graduated college with honors, I will be asked how I fed my child for decades to come. Breastfeeding is the Phi Beta Kappa of millennial motherhood. I wanted membership. But as I would soon learn, deciding to breastfeed is one thing, doing it quite another. (Lizzie Garrett Mettler, 5/21)

Boston Globe: Children Have A Right To Healthy Food At School

As longtime advocates for healthy school meals for schoolchildren, we agree that school meals should be great — our children deserve nothing less. We respectfully differ with the secretary on one point. Children will eat meals that meet the higher nutrition standards — and there is ample evidence to support our claim. (Ellen Parker and Ronald E. Kleinman, 5/22)

Stat: Why Cities May Hold The Key To Living Longer, Healthier Lives
Around the world, noncommunicable diseases — including heart disease, cancer, and diabetes — and injuries from traffic crashes and other causes kill 44 million people a year. In fact, these illnesses and accidents kill more people than communicable diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis, or malaria. Yet it's so much harder to get funding to tackle them. Noncommunicable disease cause two-thirds of the deaths in low- and middle-income countries, but less than 1 percent of total development assistance for health goes toward addressing them. (Thomas R. Frieden, 5/19)

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Morning Briefing

Wednesday, May 24, 2017

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KAISER HEALTH NEWS ORIGINAL STORIES

1. Putting A Lid On Waste: Needless Medical Tests Not Only Cost \$200B — They Can Do Harm

The health care industry thrives on ordering up tests and treatments, but some hospitals are urging restraint. (Chad Terhune, 5/24)

2. Political Cartoon: 'Drop In The Bucket?'

Kaiser Health News provides a fresh take on health policy developments with "Political Cartoon: 'Drop In The Bucket?'" by R.J. Matson, Roll Call.

Here's today's health policy haiku:

TAMPING DOWN ON UNNECESSARY MEDICINE

First rule: Do no harm!
But care should have benefits ...
Otherwise, it's waste.

- Anonymous

If you have a health policy haiku to share, please [Contact Us](#) and let us know if you want us to include your name. Keep in mind that we give extra points if you link back to a KHN original story.

Summaries Of The News:

ADMINISTRATION NEWS

3. Trump's 'Skinny Budget' Puts Health Care On A Drastic Diet

The 2018 budget proposed by the president makes deep cuts across the health care industry, from cancer research and public health to infectious diseases and drug safety. Media outlets breakdown which agency's and missions will be affected the most.

Los Angeles Times: Cancer Research, Public Health And Worker Safety Would All See Steep Cuts Under Trump Budget

Under the heading "Putting America's Health First," the Trump administration's 2018 budget blueprint includes a \$5.8-billion cut for the National Institutes of Health, a move that would slash the medical research agency's funding by just over 18%. It would reduce public health spending by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by \$1.32 billion, a 17% decline from 2017 spending levels. And it would cut the Food and Drug Administration's spending by \$854 million, a 31% decrease cut from current funding levels. (Healy, 5/23)

NPR: Trump Administration Seeks Deep Cuts In Health Care, Medical Research
The NIH, which funds research into medical treatments and basic science, would see cuts of almost \$6 billion, to about \$26 billion. That would include a \$575 million cut to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute and \$838 million cut to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, which is involved in a wide range of diseases including AIDS and Zika. The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases would be cut by \$355 million. (Kodjak and Stein, 5/23)

The Washington Post: Trump's Budget Proposal Aims To Cut All Federal Funds From Planned Parenthood

President Trump's 2018 budget proposal would bar Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers from receiving federal funds that help pay for health-care services for millions of Americans. The budget, the "New Foundation for American Greatness," was released Tuesday, proposing to cut trillions of dollars in spending during the next decade. The budget is part of the Trump administration's effort to follow through on a campaign promise to exclude "certain entities that provide abortions, including Planned Parenthood" from participating in any Department of Health and Human Services programs, according to a fact sheet from the White House. (Bever, 5/23)

The New York Times: Cuts To AIDS Treatment Programs Could Cost A Million Lives
At least one million people will die in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, researchers and advocates said on Tuesday, if funding cuts proposed by the Trump administration to global public health programs are enacted. The United States currently spends more than \$6 billion annually on programs that buy antiretroviral drugs for about 11.5 million people worldwide who are infected with H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS. The Trump administration has proposed slashing those programs by at least \$1.1 billion — nearly a

fifth of their current funding, said Jen Kates, a vice president at the Kaiser Family Foundation. (Harris, 5/23)

Stat: Trump Plan To Have Industry Pay For All Product Reviews Will Likely Go Nowhere

True to its word, the Trump administration released its 2018 budget that includes a notable change for drug and device makers — they would face a stiff increase in so-called user fees that industry pays for to fund product reviews conducted by the Food and Drug Administration. And the higher fees, which are slated to nearly double to \$2.4 billion, would be used to cover the entire cost of those reviews...The notion was widely anticipated after a May 15 letter, which written by US Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price to the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, leaked out. (Silverman, 5/23)

Stat: The Trump Budget: 8 Ways It Might Affect Public Health

The budget outline released by the White House Tuesday contains sharp cuts to everything — from a \$76 million reduction in global health funding that includes HIV programming to grass-roots community health grants. And while it's not clear what cuts will survive the congressional budget process, the proposal reveals a White House that, for the most part, wants a leaner public health system, and less American money used overseas. (Facher, 5/24)

Los Angeles Times: Scientific Research Would Take A Big Hit Under Trump's Budget — And That's Bad For The Economy, Experts Say

How does science fare under President Trump's proposed budget? Not too well. The American Assn. for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) estimated that the budget released Tuesday morning represented a 16.8% decrease in overall funding for scientific research compared with the current budget. (Netburn, 5/23)

Denver Post: Trump Budget Stirs Unease In Boulder Science Community

The release of President Donald Trump's \$4.1 trillion spending plan for the fiscal year starting in October sparked concern on Tuesday in Boulder's scientific community for its potential impact on the work that many see as critical to public safety in the face of a changing global climate. At the national level, much of the early focus has been on the budget's slashing to Medicaid and anti-poverty efforts. But its cuts to scientific research are also being viewed warily at the local level. (Brennan, 5/23)

CQ Roll Call: Budget Proposal Aims Cuts At Heart Of Zika Response

The leaders of agencies responding to the spread of Zika virus told lawmakers Tuesday that they need consistent support to combat the disease, an appeal that came on the day the White House released its budget proposal that would strip billions of dollars

from those same agencies and from public health systems strained by the effects of Zika. The Trump administration wants to cut \$7 billion from the \$34-billion National Institutes of Health in fiscal 2018, an amount that includes a \$1.1 billion cut to the \$4.9 billion National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, which is developing a promising vaccine to prevent the Zika virus. (Siddons, 5/23)

The Associated Press: Agency-By-Agency Look At Trump's Budget

The budget initiates deep cuts to health insurance programs for people with modest incomes, including coverage for children. Those cuts would go beyond the House GOP bill that repeals much of the Affordable Care Act, also known as "Obamacare," and limits future federal financing for Medicaid. (5/24)

4. Medicaid Cuts In Trump's Budget Would Be 'Just Awful,' Advocates Say

President Donald Trump is proposing \$800 billion in cuts to the program, as well as deep trims to the Children's Health Insurance Program.

The Associated Press: Poor And Disabled Big Losers In Trump Budget; Military Wins

The poor and the disabled are big losers in President Donald Trump's \$4.1 trillion budget proposal while the Pentagon is a big winner. Trump's plan for the budget year beginning Oct. 1 makes deep cuts in safety net programs, including Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program. The proposal also includes big cuts in Social Security's disability program. (Ohlemacher, 5/24)

USA Today: Health Care Advocates Say The Trump Budget Plan Would Gut Medicaid
Advocates for low income people struggled to find the words to describe the likely effect of the proposed \$800 billion in cuts proposed to Medicaid in the Trump administration's budget released Tuesday. Depending who you ask, it will be devastating or "just awful" to the lowest income Americans, especially children and those with chronic health conditions, mental illness or substance use disorder. (O'Donnell, Saker and Robinson, 5/23)

The Washington Post: Trump Budget Would Cut Health Benefits For Many Lower-Income Kids, Experts Fear

Lower-income children would have their federal health benefits cut sharply under President Trump's proposed budget, which analysts say could reverse gains that have pushed uninsured rates for this vulnerable population below 5 percent. The shift stems from a combination of factors, including a plan to reduce Medicaid by \$1.4 trillion over the next decade and a roughly 20 percent decrease in funding for the Children's Health

Insurance Program (CHIP), along with proposed changes to eligibility requirements and the way federal matching funds are calculated. (Eilperin, 5/23)

Politico: Trump Undermines Senate GOP's Medicaid Backers

A group of Republican senators is fighting desperately to preserve health coverage for millions of low-income constituents who have benefited from Obamacare. And the president of their own party seriously undercut their negotiating position with his budget Tuesday. By proposing hundreds of billions of dollars in Medicaid cuts in combination with the House-passed health care bill's more than \$800 billion in Medicaid spending reductions, President Donald Trump is effectively throwing in with fiscal conservatives looking to constrain the program's growth and wind down its coverage as quickly as possible. And that could be perilous for more than a dozen GOP senators who have been meeting for months over how to preserve the law's benefits. (Everett and Cancryn, 5/23)

PBS NewsHour: Why Schools Are Worried About Medicaid Cuts Hurting Special Education

Special education, which is hugely reliant on Medicaid, is one factor that didn't get much attention in the debate over the Republican health care bill. If the bill becomes law and triggers billions of dollars of cuts to Medicaid, how would it affect the millions of public school kids who receive special ed services? William Brangham talks to Sasha Pudelski of the American Association of School Administrators. (5/22)

5. Proposed Cuts Land With A Thunk In Congress: 'The Budget Was Dead Before The Ink Was Dry'

The severe cuts contained in President Donald Trump's proposed budget are meeting stiff bipartisan resistance in Congress.

The Washington Post: Even Some Republicans Balk At Trump's Plan For Steep Budget Cuts

While some fiscally conservative lawmakers, particularly in the House, found a lot to praise in Trump's plan to balance the budget within 10 years, most Republicans flatly rejected the White House proposal. The divide sets up a clash between House conservatives and a growing number of Senate Republicans who would rather work with Democrats on a spending deal than entertain Trump's deep cuts. "This is kind of the game," said Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Tex.). "We know that the president's budget won't pass as proposed." (Snell, Paletta and DeBonis, 5/23)

The Wall Street Journal: Bipartisan Pushback Greet's Trump's Proposed Budget

"I hate to say it, but I would say the budget was dead before the ink was dry," Rep. Don

Young (R., Alaska), who opposes the budget's elimination of two programs in his state. Payments to Medicaid, the federal-state health program for the poor, would be cut by more than \$600 billion over a decade from levels projected under current law in addition to proposed Medicaid cuts under the House bill repealing and replacing much of the Affordable Care Act. (Davidson, Peterson and Andrews, 5/23)

The Associated Press: Icy Reception To Trump Budget From Fellow Republicans
Longtime GOP Rep. Hal Rogers of Kentucky declared proposed cuts to safety net and environmental proposals "draconian." "I don't think the president's budget is going anywhere," said Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, asked if he's concerned about the message sent by slashing the Medicaid program for the poor and disabled. (Werner, 5/23)

The New York Times: Republicans Will Reject Trump's Budget, But Still Try To Impose Austerity

Finally some good news for President Trump: His new budget stands absolutely no chance of being enacted by Congress. Moving forward with the cuts outlined in the \$4.1 trillion spending plan created by the budget director, Mick Mulvaney, formerly one of the most determined fiscal hawks in Congress, would no doubt have major repercussions and compound the peril of Republicans already facing upheaval over their health care proposals. It would most likely hurt some of the very voters in rural and economically distressed corners of the nation who catapulted Mr. Trump to the White House and Republicans to control of the House and Senate. The effect on those constituents would be quickly felt. (Hulse, 5/23)

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The Associated Press: Cabinet Members Head To Capitol Hill To Defend Trump Budget

Top officials in President Donald Trump's Cabinet are heading to Capitol Hill to defend his plans to cut domestic programs and parry Democratic criticism of his tax proposals. Budget Director Mick Mulvaney appears Wednesday before the House Budget panel while Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin will testify at the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee. The budget contains virtually no further detail on taxes beyond the cuts the administration proposed in a one-page outline last month. (Taylor, 5/24)

McClatchy: Trump's Gift To At-Risk Republicans? A Budget They Can Bash

President Donald Trump may have handed Republicans leery of supporting him a great gift: a spending plan that calls for deep cuts to some of the country's most popular programs – and one they can rail against. Indeed, it did not take long for congressional

Republicans on Tuesday to distance themselves from the White House's \$4.1 trillion budget blueprint, promising their constituents they'd fight Trump's ideas. (Clark, 5/23)

The administration's Medicaid proposals draw particular criticism from both sides of the aisle —

The Hill: GOP Senators Bristle At Trump's Medicaid Cuts

GOP senators are balking at President Trump's proposed steep cuts to the nation's healthcare system for the poor, worrying that it could leave millions without health plans. Trump's budget proposal would gut Medicaid by \$627 billion over the next decade, on top of the \$839 billion that would be cut under the House-passed ObamaCare repeal-and-replace bill. Combined, Trump and House Republicans have proposed slashing \$1.4 trillion from Medicaid. (Hellmann and Weixel, 5/23)

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CQ Roll Call: White House's Proposed Medicaid Cuts Draw Quick Protests

The OMB budget says Medicaid outlays would drop by \$627 billion in the decade ending in fiscal 2027, falling to \$4.70 trillion. This appears to largely reflect a Trump administration plan to reduce the flow of federal dollars to state Medicaid funds beyond the reduction proposed in the House GOP bill (HR 1628). OMB then has a separate placeholder item in its budget for \$1.25 trillion in expected savings from Republican revisions to the 2010 health care law. (Young, 5/23)

Meanwhile, Hillary Clinton blasts the president's budget —

The Associated Press: Clinton: Trump Budget Shows 'Unimaginable' Cruelty

Hillary Clinton proclaimed Tuesday that President Donald Trump's budget shows an "unimaginable level of cruelty" for millions of Americans and children. The former Democratic presidential nominee, who recently declared herself part of the Trump resistance, lashed out at the Republican president's spending plan in aggressive terms after being honored in New York City by the Children's Health Fund, a nonprofit organization that helps provide health care to poor and homeless children. (Peoples, 5/23)

6. President's Blueprint Targets The Very People Who Helped Put Him Into Office

The proposed cuts are "a slap in the face," some voters say.

Reuters: Trump Budget Cuts May Stir Backlash In Rural America

President Donald Trump's proposals to slash federal aid to the poor, the sick and people living in rural areas reflect conservatives' demands for a smaller federal government but target many of the very people who voted for him last November. In his first detailed budget submission to Congress on Tuesday, Trump requested major reductions to programs that help poor families afford groceries and poor and disabled people get healthcare. (Cowan, 5/23)

McClatchy: Trump Budget Seen As A 'Slap In The Face' To His Rural Voters

Two of farmers' most powerful Republican advocates in the Senate slammed President Donald Trump's proposal Tuesday to slash crop insurance, warning those and other budget cuts would badly wound one of the president's most loyal constituencies. Voters who live in rural areas gave Trump a 61-34 percent advantage over Democrat Hillary Clinton in November, according to network exit polls. (Wise and Lowry, 5/23)

Modern Healthcare: Trump Budget Targets Rural Hospitals, Minority Health Professional Education

Proposed cuts in President Donald Trump's 2018 budget for HHS would reduce funding for rural hospitals and hurt the supply pipeline for black and Hispanic healthcare professionals. The budget proposal targets several rural hospital grants in its projected cuts. The Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant, at \$42 million, is proposed for elimination. The Obama administration previously had recommended cutting the program, saying it was duplicative. The new budget also zeroes out grants to state offices of rural health, a \$9 million program. (Lee, 5/23)

San Antonio Press-Express: USDA Staffing Faces Steep Cuts Under Trump Budget Proposal

More than 5,200 staffers would be cut from the agency that oversees food stamps, farm loans, animal and plant disease prevention, and other programs under the 2018 budget proposal President Donald Trump sent to Congress on Tuesday... While lawmakers on both sides of the aisle quickly proclaimed the spending plan overly aggressive and likely dead on arrival, Perdue during the call recalled getting through tough fiscal times as governor of Georgia and said he would lead the USDA amid any approved cuts. (Brezosky, 5/23)

Meanwhile, governors in California and Louisiana react to the budget —

Los Angeles Times: Trump's Budget Will Hit Hard For California's Most Vulnerable, Advocates And State Lawmakers Warn

President Trump's proposed budget would likely result in billions of dollars of cuts to vital health and human services programs in California, state Democratic lawmakers

and advocates for the poor said Tuesday. "It's unconscionable and un-American," said Gov. Jerry Brown in a written statement. (Myers, 5/23)

New Orleans Times-Picayune: Louisiana Governor To Donald Trump: Your Budget Robs My State Of Coastal Restoration Money

[Gov. John Bel] Edwards said the budget proposal also threatens key health care services such as the Children's Health Insurance Program, which offers health care to 122,000 Louisiana children. He urged the state's congressional delegation to oppose Trump's budget, "including cutting federal funding for Medicaid patients and health care providers by eliminating Medicaid expansion coverage and cutting health care for elderly and disabled residents." (Shleifstein, 5/23)

7. Proposed Gutting Of Drug Czar's Funding Rolled Back To Just Trims After Vocal Outcry

A draft of the president's budget had shown a proposed 95 percent cut to the office in the middle of an opioid epidemic. But the released plan walks that back. Meanwhile, Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Scott Gottlieb is calling on his staff to increase efforts to fight the crisis sweeping the country.

Stat: After Outcry, Trump Budget Largely Preserves 'Drug Czar' Funding

After an outcry, the Trump administration has rolled back a proposed gutting of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, instead asking for relatively small trims to the office and largely preserving two main grant programs. President Trump's 2018 budget — released Tuesday — is just a proposal; Congress actually allocates government spending. (Joseph, 5/23)

Morning Consult: Trump Drops Plan To Gut Drug Czar= 2s Office Budget

The administration's final budget proposal, released Tuesday, continues funding for the office, which oversees two key national anti-drug programs. A document leaked earlier this month proposed cutting funding for the program by 95 percent. (Reid, 5/23)

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CQ Roll Call: Drug Office Cuts Rolled Back As FDA Examines Opioid Policies

Lawmakers in states where opioid abuse is rampant praised the Office of Management and Budget for not proceeding with the original cuts. "I'm happy to see OMB reversed course and included funding for the office in its budget," said Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., a member of the Appropriations Committee. "We still have a long way

to go when it comes to the drug epidemic, and it is essential that we remain fully committed to fighting it. We need to be doing more — not less.” (Siddons, 5/23)

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The Washington Post: FDA Commissioner Gottlieb Calls For ‘More Forceful Steps’ To Curb Opioid Epidemic

Food and Drug Commissioner Scott Gottlieb called on his staff Tuesday to explore “more forceful” efforts to curb the epidemic, including requiring training for doctors and ensuring patients aren’t prescribed the medications for unnecessarily long periods that increase the risk of addiction. “Opioid prescriptions should be written only for appropriate patients and for appropriate durations,” Gottlieb said in his first interview since becoming commissioner. “No more 30-day supplies for tooth extractions” or uncomplicated hernia repairs. (McGinley, 5/23)

And in opioid news from the states —

The Associated Press: NY Senate Heroin Task Force To Hear From Experts, Ex-Users
New York lawmakers working to address the heroin and opioid epidemic want to hear from the experts — and people with first-hand experience with addiction. A state Senate Task Force is holding a public hearing Wednesday at the Fulton-Montgomery Community College in Johnstown. (5/24)

Arizona Republic: Attorney General Works With CVS To Make Anti-Overdose Drug Available

CVS drugstores will begin selling Naloxone — an opioid-overdose reversal drug — without a prescription in Arizona, the company said Tuesday. Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich said he has been working with pharmacies to combat opioid addiction in Arizona. (Gundran, 5/23)

Health News Florida: Report: Fentanyl Now Florida’s Deadliest Drug

A new report from Florida medical examiners finds fentanyl caused more deaths than any other drug in Florida last year. With fentanyl coming into the U.S. illegally in pill and powder form, it’s now being cut with heroin. (Aboraya, 5/23)

WABE: What Is ‘Gray Death,’ And How Does It Kill?

Amid Georgia’s opioid problem, a new drug has entered the market. “Gray death,” a cocktail of several opioids, was reported to have claimed its first death in Georgia last week. Despite efforts to curtail the spread of opioids in the Southeast, drugs are getting

even stronger and more deadly, according to Georgia Bureau of Investigation public affairs director Nelly Miles. (Such, 5/23)

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HEALTH LAW

8. Washington Waits With Bated Breath For CBO Score On GOP Health Plan

The politically bruised agency is expected to release the score Wednesday, which will determine whether the Senate can move forward with any plans to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

The Associated Press: Budget Office To Gauge Health Bill Effect On Coverage, Cost Congressional Republicans are about to learn more about whether their drive to dismantle President Barack Obama's health care law has been worth the political pain they've been experiencing. The Congressional Budget Office planned to release its estimate Wednesday of what impact the GOP's House-passed health care overhaul would have on coverage and premiums. (Fram and Alonso-Zaldivar, 5/24)

Politico: Republicans Gird For CBO Verdict On Obamacare Repeal Republicans are bracing for a report Wednesday expected to say their Obamacare repeal plan would leave millions of Americans without health insurance, further complicating their efforts to pass legislation quickly. The CBO's analysis of the bill comes three weeks after House Republicans rushed to vote on the legislation without an update on its cost, or its impact on the nation's uninsured. The agency's score will serve as the unofficial framework for Senate lawmakers negotiating their own version of repeal and will likely help those eager to make big changes. It's also expected to become a rallying point for Democrats critical of an effort that could strip health care from millions. (Cancryn and Ferris, 5/23)

9. A Plea To Congress From The Industry: Give Us A Short-Term Fix To Stabilize Marketplace

Hospitals, physician groups, health insurers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce are all asking lawmakers to step in to make sure the marketplaces don't collapse amid the uncertainty around the Affordable Care Act and the Republicans' efforts to dismantle it. Meanwhile, there's growing pressure for the Senate to pass a version of the legislation

before August recess. And CEOs are hiding behind big lobbying groups when it comes to wielding influence on the plan.

Los Angeles Times: With Healthcare In Turmoil, Senate Republicans Are Under Pressure To Buck Trump

Senate Republicans face increasing pressure to rescue health insurance markets and protect coverage for millions of Americans amid growing fears the Trump administration is going to let the markets collapse. In recent days, leading hospitals, physician groups, health insurers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce have pleaded with the Senate to step in, effectively going around the White House. (Levey and Mascaro, 5/23)

Roll Call: Republican Senator Seeks to Save Obamacare Before Dismantling It
Sen. Lamar Alexander has found himself in an uncommon position for most Republicans this year: Trying to save the shaky insurance markets created by the 2010 health care law before attending to a major overhaul of the law. The opinions of the Tennessee's senior senator carry significant weight among his colleagues. He is a close confidant of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and also chairs the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. And while Alexander has been a near constant critic of former President Barack Obama's signature domestic achievement, he is now one of the leading voices in the chamber for saving it, at least for 2018 and 2019. (Williams, 5/24)

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CQ HealthBeat: McConnell Clamps Down On Health Care Leaks

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell sent a warning to staffers last week amid growing frustration at the amount of information leaking from private Republican discussions on repealing the 2010 health law. At a May 16 meeting of his health care working group, the Kentucky Republican excused all non-leadership staffers after expressing annoyance over the number of leaks about the closed-door discussions, GOP senators and aides told Roll Call. He was particularly frustrated with a report that cited a verbatim conversation that took place during a prior meeting, according to one lawmaker who spoke on the condition of anonymity. (Williams and Mershon, 5/23)

The Hill: Senate Feels Pressure For Summer Healthcare Vote

Senate Republicans are under mounting pressure to pass an ObamaCare repeal-and-replace bill before the congressional recess in August. While Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) is wary of committing to a specific deadline after the House struggled to pass a bill, the White House wants the upper chamber to hit the gas. Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price and House GOP lawmakers are

publicly nudging the Senate to vote before lawmakers leave town at the end of July. (Carney, 5/24)

Modern Healthcare: Healthcare CEOs Have Zipped Their Lips On AHCA Politics
House Republicans' Affordable Care Act repeal-and-replace bill is likely to undergo serious changes before the Senate votes on the legislation. But few healthcare CEOs are wielding their influence publicly to shape the legislation that will significantly affect their companies' bottom lines and customers. Insurer and provider executives are hiding behind industry lobbying groups, including America's Health Insurance Plans and the American Hospital Association, instead of using their power to influence lawmakers on the GOP's American Health Care Act. Their silence is a missed opportunity to serve their patients' best interests, some experts say. (Livingston, 5/23)

In other news on the American Health Care Act —

The Washington Post: Fact-Checking A Rosy Portrait Of The American Health Care Act
In a \$2 million ad campaign to support the House GOP health plan, the right-leaning American Action Network (AAN) features a California woman named Elizabeth Jacinto who says she suffered under Obamacare and expresses enthusiasm for the American Health Care Act. The ACHA only narrowly passed the House and was greeted lukewarmly by the Senate, so a key part of the effort appears to assist 21 GOP lawmakers who cast a tough vote to support proposal. (Kessler, 5/24)

The Associated Press: Health Care Is Key Issue As Montana Fills US House Seat
Meagher County, Montana, may not be much different than the rest of the rural enclaves across America that voted overwhelmingly for Donald Trump last fall. The median annual household income is \$38,000 — about 25 percent below the national average. Nearly 20 percent of its 1,800 residents live in poverty. And more than one in four people don't have health insurance. (5/23)

Concord Monitor: N.H. Legislators Push Bill To Let Regulators React To Health Insurance Upheaval

Facing a repeal of the Affordable Care Act and potential premium hikes next year, New Hampshire lawmakers are proposing to give state regulators broad authority to quickly respond...Under the measure, the state insurance department can work with the New Hampshire Health Plan to take steps meant to maintain coverage and stabilize prices in the individual market. Those could include reviving a high-risk pool or seeking waivers from the federal government to get money, officials said. Gov. Chris Sununu said in a letter that it is not his intent to waive requirements that insurers cover pre-existing

conditions. Any changes would need a public hearing and sign-off from a legislative oversight committee. (Morris, 5/24)

Boston Globe: Study Finds That More Than 10 Percent Of Mass. Residents Would Be Uninsured If US House Health Care Bill Passes

Massachusetts, the state with the highest rate of residents with health insurance, could see its uninsured rate jump above 10 percent if the sweeping health care bill approved by the US House becomes law, according to a new analysis. The bill known as the American Health Care Act, which is backed by House Republicans and President Trump, would repeal huge portions of former president Obama's health care law. (Dayal McCluskey, 5/23)

WBUR: GOP Health Bill Would Hike Uninsured Rate In Massachusetts To 10.3 Percent, Report Finds

For more than a decade, Massachusetts has had the lowest number of residents without health insurance in the nation. The rate dropped after the passage of a 2006 state coverage law and has remained low under Obamacare. But a study from the Urban Institute, a D.C.-based think tank that bills itself as independent, projects the state's uninsured rate would rise from 2.8 percent to 10.3 percent by 2022 — a nearly four-fold increase. (Bebinger, 5/23)

WBUR: CVS Health CEO Larry Merlo On GOP Health Care Plan, Opioid Crisis And Tax Overhaul

As America waits to hear from Washington about the future of health care, CVS Health is one major company that stands to feel a big impact from repealing the Affordable Care Act. The company has made major changes to its business to focus more on consumer health, including a 2014 decision to stop selling tobacco products. (Hobson, 5/23)

10. Moderate At Center Of House Health Bill Negotiations Gives Up Chairman Position

Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-N.J.), who worked with Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) to get the GOP health plan through a reluctant House, said his decision to quit his position as head of the Tuesday Group was because some of the members have "a very different view of governing."

The Associated Press: Congressman Quits Post In GOP Group Over Health Care Bill
A New Jersey Republican congressman who helped push the House health care bill to passage quit his post Tuesday as a chairman of the chamber's moderate Tuesday Group, criticizing colleagues for having "different objectives and a different sense of

governing than I do." Rep. Tom MacArthur, a second-term congressman, announced his decision at a closed-door meeting of the group, which has roughly 50 members. (Fram, 5/23)

USA Today: Rep. Tom MacArthur Quits As Leader Of Moderate Tuesday Group
"I realized through the health care debates that people in my group wanted different things. They had a very different view of governing," MacArthur told reporters during a House vote Tuesday. MacArthur became co-chairman of the Tuesday Group at the beginning of this year. A former insurance executive now in his second term in the House, he was the first New Jersey Republican to support House leaders' bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare. (Jackson, 5/23)

Politico: MacArthur Resigns As Co-Chairman Of 'Clearly Divided' Tuesday Group
"Clearly, our group is divided. Many in the Tuesday Group are eager to live up to our ideal of being problem-solvers, while others seem unwilling to compromise," MacArthur, 56, told the group, according to prepared remarks obtained by POLITICO New Jersey. (Jennings, 5/23)

The Washington Post: Q&A: Rep. Tom MacArthur And The Agony Of GOP Moderates In Trump's Washington
MacArthur's brief and uneasy turn under the national spotlight has been telling. Exchanges from his packed forum this month in deep-blue Willingboro — mostly of supporters of the Affordable Care Act fuming about his attempts to repeal and replace the law — have been replayed endlessly on cable news. And the centrists MacArthur once led are increasingly nervous about their reelection chances — and have grouched that his eagerness to cut a deal with Freedom Caucus hard-liners is partly responsible for their vulnerability. (Costa, 5/23)

QUALITY

11. Review Of H-1B Visa Practices Imperils Efforts To Attract Foreign Doctors To Underserved Areas

The Trump administration has suspended the 15-day expedited process to obtain an H-1B visa. Those visas are often used by hospitals and medical groups to hire foreign-born workers in specialty fields.

Stateline: Changes To Visa Program Put Foreign-Born Doctors In Limbo
For parts of the country that have difficulty attracting American-born doctors, the uncertainty swirling around the H-1B program is already creating problems, with doctors tied up in legal uncertainty rather than treating patients. ... Hospitals in

distressed urban neighborhoods also rely on foreign-born medical school graduates to fill medical residencies that might otherwise go vacant. (Ollove, 5/23)

WBUR: LA Health Clinic 'A Microcosm' Of Fears About Trump Administration Policies
President Trump's push to repeal the Affordable Care Act, crack down on illegal immigration and impose a ban on people trying to enter the U.S. from certain Muslim majority countries has many worried. (Plevin, 5/22)

MEDICAID

12. Some States, Facing Tight Budgets, Working To Recertify Medicaid Enrollees' Eligibility

Missouri, Wyoming and Mississippi have enacted laws to scrutinize whether Medicaid or food stamp recipients are eligible, and several other states are considering such measures. News outlets also report on Medicaid news from Oregon, Iowa, Indiana and Kansas.

Stateline: What Happens When States Go Hunting For Welfare Fraud
Now, faced with growing Medicaid enrollment and tight budgets, Republican lawmakers in several ... states are taking ... steps to ensure that people receiving welfare benefits are eligible for them. Under their proposals, which are modeled on legislation drafted by a national conservative group, recipients would face tougher and more frequent eligibility checks. And the checks could be conducted by private contractors who are motivated to justify their hiring by knocking as many people as possible off the rolls. (Fifield, 5/23)

The Oregonian: Health Authority Estimates 32,000 Medicaid Recipients Could Be Ineligible

Oregon Health Authority officials told a legislative committee Tuesday that the agency might have provided Medicaid benefits to some 32,000 people who no longer qualified for them. If historical trends hold true, as the state processes a backlog of 115,000 Medicaid renewals, 28 percent of them could be deemed ineligible because they make too much money. But Lynne Saxton, director of the health authority, flatly rejected the idea that the lingering questions about the state's Medicaid rolls poses a financial risk for the state. The questions come just as state lawmakers consider a new tax on health care providers. At the federal level, the Trump administration continues to push for the repeal of the Affordable Care Act and the sweeping Medicaid changes that came with it. (Manning, 5/23)

Des Moines Register: Privatized Medicaid Appears To Be Saving Iowa Money. But Is It Real?

Iowa will spend \$600 less on each Medicaid recipient this year compared with before private companies were hired to manage the program, according to a projection from the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency. ... The data does not account for millions of dollars in losses the private companies hired to manage the program have accrued in the current fiscal year, losses Iowa has agreed to at least partially repay in 2018. Those losses won't show up in the current year's budget. (Clayworth, 5/23)

Modern Healthcare: Indiana Medicaid Director Moser Steps Down

Joe Moser, a key architect of Indiana's alternative Medicaid expansion program has stepped down from his role as the state's Medicaid director. Moser was appointed by then-Gov. Mike Pence in 2013 and oversaw the care of more than 1.5 million Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program enrollees. Moser told Modern Healthcare he has no plans to work with the Trump administration, but would be open to that possibility. He decided to leave Indiana's Medicaid agency in order to pursue new opportunities. (Dickson, 5/23)

Kansas City Star: Federal Officials Accept Plan To Fix Kansas Medicaid Program
Federal officials have accepted a corrective action plan for Kansas' privatized Medicaid program, an important hurdle in ensuring the program can continue to operate next year. The federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services had rejected the state's request to extend its KanCare program through 2018 in January after finding that the program was "substantively out of compliance" with federal regulations. (Lowry, 5/23)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

13. Who Should Be Punished When A Child Dies From An Accidental Gunshot? The Answer Varies State To State

A series by USA Today and The Associated Press offers a look at gun safety and children in different states.

USA Today/The Associated Press: Gun Deaths: When Kids Find Guns, Should Parents Be Blamed?

Amy Pittman learned on her first day in jail to bottle up her grief. As soon as she arrived, guards took her shoelaces so she wouldn't try to hang herself. Cry too much or scream too loud and she feared they would come back to take everything she had left — her clothes, a sheet, a plastic spork. (Penzenstadler, Foley and Fenn, 5/24)

USA Today/The Associated Press: States Rejecting Bills Intended To Keep Guns Away From Kids

In state after state, proposals that would create or toughen laws intended to keep kids from getting ahold of unsecured guns have stalled — caught up in a debate over whether they are effective prevention measures or just government overreach. Child access prevention laws allow prosecutors to bring charges against adults who fail to safely store their loaded guns, especially when they are obtained by minors and used to harm. (Foley and Penzenstadler, 5/24)

In related news —

KCUR: Kansas Committee Advances Bill To Keep Gun Ban At Some Health Facilities
The Kansas Senate Ways and Means Committee on Tuesday advanced a bill that would allow public health care facilities to continue to ban concealed guns. A state law taking effect July 1 will allow people to carry concealed guns into any public building that is not secured by armed guards and metal detectors. The bill that advanced Tuesday would allow guns to be banned at state-run psychiatric hospitals, publicly owned medical facilities and the University of Kansas Health System. (Koranda, 5/23)

Cleveland Plain Dealer: Cuyahoga County Council Considers Banning Guns From Child Care Centers
Legislation prohibiting guns in any agency that has a contract with Cuyahoga County to provide preschool, daycare and after-school services to children will be introduced Tuesday in County Council. A state law, that went into effect on March 21, allows licensed Ohioans to carry concealed guns to more places. (Farkas, 5/23)

14. Teaching Hospitals Have Lower Death Rates For Older Patients Than Less Costly Community Hospitals

Researchers found that the 30-day mortality rate at major teaching facilities was 8.3 percent, compared with 9.5 percent at non-teaching ones. Today's other public health stories cover child fatalities from car crashes, near-death experiences, botulism in California, and the heart benefits of chocolate.

Stat: Pricey Teaching Hospitals Have Lowest Death Rates For Older Patients
At a time when insurers are steering patients away from expensive academic medical centers, a new study counters the idea that the quality of care is consistent across hospitals, concluding that major teaching hospitals have lower mortality rates for older patients than community hospitals. Using millions of Medicare records, researchers

found that the 30-day mortality rate — the percentage of patients who died within 30 days of hospitalization and one common way to gauge quality — was 8.3 percent at major teaching hospitals, compared with 9.2 percent at minor teaching hospitals and 9.5 percent at non-teaching hospitals. The figures accounted for differences in patient populations and hospital characteristics. (Joseph, 5/23)

NPR: One Fifth Of Children In Fatal Car Crashes Were Improperly Restrained

A new study found that 20 percent of children who were in a fatal car crashes were not buckled in properly, or were not wearing a seat belt at all, and that child fatality rates in deadly car crashes vary widely by state. The results add evidence to the argument that state regulations and public information tactics can affect motor vehicle safety for kids. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has noted that, for example, seat belt use across all age groups is higher in states with more stringent seat belt enforcement laws. (Hersher, 5/23)

Cronkite News: 'Everybody Wants That Miracle': Survivors Of Near-Drownings Face Tough Road To Recovery

The state's constant warm climate keeps pools open year-round, the most common environment for drownings involving toddlers; in fact, toddlers in the Grand Canyon state are far more likely to drown compared with rates of childhood drownings from around the nation — and authorities say they're nearly all preventable. For those who survive, recovery could last a lifetime. (Souse, 5/23)

The Associated Press: California Botulism Outbreak Is Rare Case Of Deadly Disease
A deadly botulism outbreak linked to contaminated nacho-cheese dip sold in a California gas station is a rare case of the disease that can cause paralysis and death. The outbreak in the Sacramento area left one man dead and sent nine people to a hospital. Here are some things to know about botulism. (5/23)

The New York Times: Why Chocolate May Be Good For The Heart

Eating chocolate has been tied to a reduced risk of heart disease. Now scientists have uncovered one possible reason. Using data from a large Danish health study, researchers have found an association between chocolate consumption and a lowered risk for atrial fibrillation, the irregular heartbeat that can lead to stroke, heart failure and other serious problems. The study is in Heart. (Bakalar, 5/23)

15. WHO's Next Director-General Will Be First To Come From Africa

Former Ethiopian health minister Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has been elected to head the World Health Organization, the United Nations agency responsible for

coordinating international responses to infectious disease epidemics like Ebola and Zika.

The New York Times: W.H.O. Elects Ethiopia's Tedros As First Director General From Africa

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus of Ethiopia was voted director general of the World Health Organization on Tuesday, the first African ever to head the agency. The election was the first conducted by the W.H.O. under more open and democratic rules. After nearly two years of public campaigning, originally by six candidates, the voting took place in a closed-door session in which the health ministers of 186 countries cast their ballots in secret. (McNeil and Cumming-Bruce, 5/23)

The Washington Post: WHO Picks Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesu Of Ethiopia To Lead The Global Health Agency

During the third and final round of balloting in Geneva, members of the World Health Assembly voted 133 to 50 to pick Tedros, as he is known, to be the next director-general, according to unofficial tallies. Cheers broke out, observers said, as he beat out David Nabarro, a 67-year-old physician and longtime United Nations official from Britain, and Sania Nishtar, a 54-year-old cardiologist from Pakistan. It was the first time member states took part in a secret ballot that gave each member state an equal vote. In the past, leaders were chosen by an executive board and voting took place behind closed doors. Nishtar was eliminated during the first round of voting. (Sun, 5/23)

STATE WATCH

16. State Highlights: Contract Dispute In Ariz. Leaves Many Out Of Network At Dignity Health Hospitals; Texas Lawmakers OK Maternal Health Bills

Media outlets report on news from Arizona, Texas, California, Minnesota, Georgia, Colorado and Florida.

Arizona Republic: Thousands Of Arizonans Lose 'In-Network' Insurance Coverage At Dignity Hospitals

A contract dispute has left thousands of Health Net customers without insurance coverage at Dignity Health's Arizona chain of hospitals, clinics and doctors. A three-year contract that guaranteed Health Net-insured customers could access and pay lower, in-network rates at Dignity-owned hospitals and health facilities expired Saturday. (Alltucker, 5/23)

Texas Tribune: Texas Legislators Pass Bills Aimed At Maternal Mortality, Postpartum Depression

Texas legislators from both chambers passed bills on Tuesday aimed at helping mothers before and after they give birth... About 17 percent of Texas mothers experience postpartum depression, according to a 2016 report from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and the Texas Department of State Health Services. (Evans, 5/23)

Sacramento Bee: Health Care For Illegal Immigrants Proposed By California Senator
State Sen. Ricardo Lara doesn't only want to reconstruct the way health care is delivered and paid for in California. As the debate around publicly funded universal health care heats up in the Capitol, Lara is also seeking to expand the state's low-income health program to undocumented adults up to age 26. (Hart and Miller, 5/23)

The Star Tribune: Minnesota Surveillance Camera Ruling A Victory For Nursing Home Residents

With state health inspectors overwhelmed by maltreatment complaints, the tiny cameras have become an important tool for families who suspect abuse or neglect but feel nursing home authorities dismiss their concerns. Yet the cameras — small enough to fit inside a potted plant or a stuffed doll — have become a major point of controversy. (Serres, 5/23)

Georgia Health News: State AG Backs Wider View Of Records In Hospital Court Fight
The state's attorney general has urged the Georgia Supreme Court to reverse a lower court opinion that barred access to Northside Hospital's financial records. Chris Carr, in office since late last year, said in a Monday court filing that the Georgia Open Records Act is broader in its applications than what Northside Hospital has argued. (Miller, 5/23)

Atlanta Journal Constitution: GA Attorney General Weighs In On Northside Hospital Open Records Case

Georgia law requires open government even when a private party is carrying out the public's work, Attorney General Christopher Carr argued in a brief filed Monday in the Northside Hospital open records case before the Georgia Supreme Court... The Georgia Supreme Court asked the Attorney General's office to file an opinion in the hotly-contested case that started when attorney E. Kendrick Smith requested documents from Northside under the state's sunshine law. (Teegardin, 5/23)

Texas Tribune: Grieving Mom "Humbled" And "Relieved" After Senate Passes Autopsy Bill

As the Texas Senate passed a bill on Tuesday that would ensure parents can view

their deceased child's body before an autopsy is conducted, a grieving mother shed tears from the gallery... Currently, parents need permission from a justice of the peace or medical examiner to see their deceased child if his or her death occurs outside a hospital or health care institution. (Mansoor, 5/23)

Austin American Statesman: Texas Senate Approves Bill Aimed At Identifying Postpartum Depression

The Texas Senate on Tuesday approved a bill aimed at increasing identification of postpartum depression among mothers participating in federally backed health care programs for low-income families. Under House Bill 2466 by Rep. Sarah Davis, R-West University Place, mothers who bring their kids in for checkups can get screened for postpartum depression by their children's pediatricians. (Collins Walsh, 5/23)

Denver Post: New Leadville Hospital Dealt Major Setback After Feds Withhold Loan
Lake County's only hospital, St. Vincent in Leadville, has put plans to build a new facility on hold after financial projections came up shorter than expected, indicating the small hospital has recovered from the financial brink but still needs to improve its balance sheet before a much-needed building upgrade. In 2014, the hospital announced it would be shutting down because of critical building repairs and declining revenues, but service cuts and a partnership struck several months later with Centura Health — which also runs St. Anthony Summit Medical Center in Frisco — kept the 138-year-old hospital open. (5/23)

Sacramento Bee: Abortion Reversal Therapy Grows More Popular Despite Doubts
Several California clinics advertise the therapy, claiming to be able to undo the effects of the first dose containing mifepristone, which blocks progesterone production and causes the uterine lining to shed. The second set of pills contains misoprostol, which makes the uterus contract and initiates bleeding and cramping. More than 350 providers nationwide perform abortion reversal therapy, according to proponents of the treatment. (Caiola, 5/23)

Kansas City Star: Kansas Records: Several Hotline Calls Still Didn't Save Adrian Jones

The head of Kansas' child welfare agency said earlier this month that social workers' last contact with the family of Adrian Jones was in February 2012. But records obtained by The Kansas City Star on Tuesday show that social workers with the Kansas Department for Children and Families investigated a hotline call 10 months later, in December 2012. (Baurer and Woodall, 5/23)

Kansas City Star: Missouri Hospital And Clinic Settle Medicare Fraud Suit
A Missouri hospital, clinic and infusion center have agreed to pay \$34 million to settle a

federal lawsuit that alleged they defrauded Medicare. The suit alleged that Mercy Hospital Springfield and its affiliate, Mercy Clinic Springfield Communities, had an improper financial agreement that provided kickbacks to oncologists based on the value of their chemotherapy referrals to the infusion center. (Marso, 5/23)

KQED: Valero Outage Prompts Benicia To Consider Industrial Safety Ordinance
City officials would have greater oversight over the Valero refinery under a proposal set to be unveiled at the Benicia City Council meeting on Tuesday—a potential reform prompted by the major outage at the facility earlier this month. Mayor Elizabeth Patterson is proposing the city develop regulations similar to those in Contra Costa County, home to several refineries. That county's industrial safety ordinance, considered to be one of the strongest in the country, requires oil refining facilities to undergo safety audits and have risk management plans. (Goldberg, 5/23)

Miami Herald: John Morgan 'Prepared To Invest \$100M' In Medical Marijuana
John Morgan spent nearly \$7 million pushing two statewide ballot initiatives to expand medical marijuana throughout the state of Florida. But that's a drop in the bucket compared to what the wealthy Orlando attorney and possible gubernatorial candidate says he's prepared to invest in the industry now that it's about to explode. (Smiley, 5/23)

PRESCRIPTION DRUG WATCH

17. With Little Federal Progress Being Made, States Step Up Own Efforts To Curb High Drug Prices

Bills in California and Nevada reflect a growing trend across the country. Outlets report on news out of Ohio, Texas and New York, as well.

Stat: Different Bills To Curb Drug Prices Advance In Two States

Two different types of bills advanced through a pair of state legislatures late last week, a pointed reminder to the pharmaceutical industry that its business practices will continue to encounter significant pushback. (Silverman, 5/22)

FiercePharma: Nevada Bill Could Force Sanofi, Novo And Lilly To Reveal Their Insulin Pricing Secrets

As a variety of states weigh measures targeting pharmaceutical pricing, Nevada's Senate has passed a tough new bill that would publicly spotlight insulin makers' price hikes and profits. Approved by the Nevada Senate on Friday, the bill would force diabetes drugmakers to disclose information on their insulin pricing, profits, costs and

more, and would require the state government to publish the information publicly on the internet. (Sagonowsky, 5/22)

FiercePharma: Look Out, Pharma Marketers. California May Turn Off Speaking Fees And Ban Pharma Gifts

Pharma reps may soon have to cancel any doctor dinners they have planned in California. A state-level bill would cut off most drugmaker payments to physicians, including speaking fees for that staple of pharma marketing, the slideshow over dinner. Dinners themselves would have to be cheap, too: Per person, drugmakers could only spend \$250 per year on free meals. (Staton, 5/22)

Columbus Dispatch: Broad Coalition Anchored By Drug Makers Opposes Ohio Ballot Issue

Opponents of a ballot issue aimed at lowering prescription drug prices today announced a broad coalition to fight the proposal Ohioans will see in the Nov. 7 election. The group Ohioans Against the Deceptive Rx Ballot Issue formed to oppose the Ohio Drug Price Relief Act, an initiated statute that, if passed, would require the state government to pay no more for prescription drugs than the lowest price paid by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (Johnson, 5/23)

Columbus Dispatch: High-Powered, Bipartisan Team Lined Up To Push Drug Price Vote

The Ohio Drug Price Relief Act will have a high-profile bipartisan campaign team working to pass the ballot issue in the Nov. 7 election. Financed in part by the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, the act would require state agencies to pay no more for prescription drugs than the lowest price paid by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Supporters say that could lower prices by 40 percent or more and cause a ripple effect for Ohio consumers. (Candisky, 5/16)

Cleveland.com: Former Ohio Medicaid Directors Oppose Drug Price Ballot Issue
Three former Ohio Medicaid directors say a November ballot measure intended to lower prescription drug prices would have the opposite effect for most Ohioans. "The money's going to come from some place and this is not the way to do it," John McCarthy, former Medicaid director under Gov. John Kasich, said in a Tuesday phone call with reporters. The call was organized by opponents to the measure, Ohioans Against the Deceptive Rx Ballot Issue, which launched their campaign earlier in the day. (Borchardt, 5/23)

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Cleveland Plain Dealer: Medical Professionals, Business Groups Among Opponents To Ohio Drug Price Relief Act

Ohio medical professionals, veterans' groups and business interests are lining up against a statewide ballot measure promising lower prescription drug prices. Opponents to the "Ohio Drug Price Relief Act" say the proposed law would actually increase drug costs for the majority of Ohioans. (Borchardt, 5/23)

Texas Tribune: Scientists Wary As Texas Mulls Allowing Sale Of Unproven Drugs

A group of scientists and medical professionals is sounding the alarm in the final days of the Texas legislative session about a little-noticed bill that would allow manufacturers of unproven drugs to sell their products to dying patients. Supporters of House Bill 3236 by state Rep. Kyle Kacal, R-College Station, say it could help incentivize drugmakers to get promising, experimental drugs onto the market and into needy patients' hands. (Walters, 5/23)

Kaiser Health News: New York State Wants Its Prescription Drug Money Back — Or Else

New York Medicaid regulators aim to use the threat of imposing increased scrutiny of prescription drugs — such as eyeing their relative effectiveness and their profit margins — to coax additional discounts from drugmakers. The rules, signed into law in mid-April as part of the state's budget, don't go as far as the surcharge that Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo originally sought to control the "skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs," but they retain elements guaranteed to get under a pharmaceutical executive's skin. (Appleby, 5/22)

18. Amazon Mulls Entering PBM Field, Even As These Middlemen Bear Brunt Of Blame Over High Drug Costs

News outlets report on stories related to pharmaceutical pricing.

Stat: Can Amazon Win As A Pharmacy Benefits Manager?

What kind of impact could Amazon have if the ubiquitous company enters the mysterious and complicated world of pharmacy benefit managers? The online retailer is reportedly exploring the pharmacy business and, as part of the plan, may build an internal PBM for its own employees, but later roll this out to the world at large. The possibility is intriguing because it comes at a time when these middlemen — which negotiate with drug makers for favorable insurance coverage — are under varying degrees of financial and political pressure. (Silverman, 5/18)

Stat: US Drug Prices Are So High That Canada Wants Other Countries As Reference Points

How high are drug prices in the US? So high that the Canadian government may remove the US from its long-standing list of countries that are used as a guide for determining whether prices are excessive. In a proposal issued last week, Health Canada said it wants to overhaul the framework used by the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, which assesses therapeutic benefits and sets ceiling prices. Right now, this is accomplished, in part, by benchmarking prices against what drug makers currently charge in seven other countries — the US, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. (Silverman, 5/22)

The Wall Street Journal: How The FDA Approved A \$300,000-A-Year Drug Its Own Experts Didn't Believe Worked

Jennifer McNary, a stay-at-home mother, was desperate to find a medicine that might spare her two sons an early death from a rare form of muscular dystrophy. Chris Garabedian, the chief executive of a pharmaceutical firm, was desperate to find a profitable drug that would reverse his company's slow fall. They met in June 2012 at a conference on Duchenne muscular dystrophy and joined forces, often behind the scenes and with little public disclosure, in a yearslong mission to push the government to approve a drug to treat DMD, as it is known. (Pulliam and Mullins, 5/19)

Stat: Generic Hepatitis C Meds Really Are Cost Effective: Study

For the past three years, various governments and patient advocacy groups have clamored for lower-cost hepatitis C medicines, given the high cure rate for these pricey new drugs. Now, a new study finds that upfront treatment with cheaper generic versions can offer a substantial payback. Using a mathematical model for patients in India, researchers found that copycat versions costing around \$300 would increase life expectancy by more than eight years and reduce lifetime health care costs by more than \$1,300 per person. (Silverman, 5/18)

The Wall Street Journal: FDA Approves Merck's Keytruda To Treat Cancers With Genetic Defects

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday approved Merck & Co.'s Keytruda drug to treat tumors with a certain genetic defect—the first time the agency has cleared a cancer drug for a use not tied to the site of a tumor. The FDA approved Keytruda to treat tumors with genetic defects known as “microsatellite instability= 2” or “mismatch repair” deficiencies, which are present in an estimated 4% of cancers. Studies showed the drug shrank tumors in a significant number of patients with colorectal and 14 other cancer types that had the genetic defect. (Loftus, 5/23)

The Wall Street Journal: Alexion's Shakeup Continues As Four Executives Exit
Alexion Pharmaceuticals Inc.'s new chief executive is reshaping the top ranks of the organization following an internal investigation into sales practices prompted by a former employee. (Tweh and Rockoff, 5/23)

CQ Roll Call: House GOP Tries Last-Minute Push For FDA Marketing Change
Republicans are attempting to address a major priority of the drug and medical device industries as part of a bill to fund the Food and Drug Administration, but in so doing risk injecting a controversial issue into what was supposed to be a smooth bipartisan negotiation. The makers of drugs and devices want the FDA to loosen the regulations governing how they can discuss and promote uses of their products that haven't been explicitly approved. Approved uses are typically identified on a product's label, but the practice of using drugs or devices in a so-called "off-label" way is common in some areas of medicine where treatment options may be limited, such as for cancer patients or pediatric populations. (Siddons, 5/24)

Stat: FDA Leaps Into Precision Medicine — With Caveats
The many proponents of precision medicine have long promised a world where terms like "lung cancer" and "melanoma" are rendered quaint by the awesome power of genomics. And the FDA, with its latest approval, just endorsed that vision of the future. The agency cleared Merck's blockbuster cancer drug Keytruda to treat any solid tumor with one of two genetic abnormalities, marking the first time the FDA has granted such an agnostic approval. There are, of course, caveats — the mutations are rare, and Keytruda can be used only after a prior treatment has failed — but it's a milestone approval nonetheless, and one that will be heartening to some forward-thinking biotech companies. (Garde, 5/23)

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Stat: UK Regulator Says Merck Broke Competition Laws Over Biosimilars
The UK antitrust regulator accused Merck of illegally offering discounts for the Remicade biologic medicine in order to block lower-cost biosimilar versions. In a brief statement, the Competition and Markets Authority said it found that the drug maker "provisionally broke the competition law and was "abusing its dominant position" in the market with its discount scheme. Remicade is used to treat chronic inflammatory diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis. (Silverman, 5/23)

Reuters: India's Drug Pricing Regulator Clamps Down On Drug Cocktails
India's drug pricing regulator has demanded explanations from 65 domestic and global drugmakers for selling new forms of essential diabetes and antibiotic drugs without its

approval. The move could bring penalties for the drugmakers, among them Abbott Laboratories, Sanofi, Novartis and Indian firms such as Sun Pharmaceutical Industries and Lupin, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) said on its website. (Siddiqui, 5/18)

Reuters: UK Competition Watchdog Accuses Merck Of Obstructing Biosimilars
Britain's competition watchdog has accused Merck & Co of operating an unfair discount scheme for its medicine Remicade that it said was designed to restrict competition from so-called biosimilar copies. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said on Tuesday it had provisionally found the U.S. company's European unit, Merck Sharp & Dohme, had abused its dominant position through the scheme, opening it up to potential financial penalties. (Hirschler, 5/23)

Stat: Former Lilly Employee Wins An Ironic Lawsuit Over Disability Benefits
A federal appeals court ruled last week that Eli Lilly should not have ended disability benefits to a former human resources director who claimed she was unable to continue working because she suffered from fibromyalgia, a chronic neurologic condition. Yet at the same time the former employee was fighting in court to have those benefits restored, the drug maker was marketing a medicine in the US to treat the condition, which one of its own consultants had described as "very disabling," according to court documents. (Silverman, 5/22)

Stat: How A Drug Ad Made Its Way Into 'General Hospital'
[Anna] Devane is a soap opera character, as you might have guessed, appearing for the last 32 years on "General Hospital." And her dramatic diagnosis is brought to you by Incyte Corp., a biotech company that happens to market a drug for her on-screen disease, the rare blood disorder polycythemia vera. The scene, which aired in February, is a novel twist on what's called unbranded advertising, in which drug companies detail the symptoms of a disease but refrain from mentioning the names of any drugs. (Garde, 5/18)

FiercePharma: Drama And Diagnosis On Soap Opera Set Troubles Cancer Doctors, Puts Incyte In Hot Seat

Soap operas often include medical mysteries and miracles, but a couple of real-life doctors are concerned about Incyte's connection to the latest drama on General Hospital. Writing in JAMA, oncologists Sham Mailankody and Vinay Prasad question the ABC soap opera's rare-disease plot enabled by a partnership with the biopharma company Incyte. In the General Hospital storyline begun in February, leading character Anna Devane is diagnosed with a rare blood cancer called polycythemia vera (PV). The show doctors explain to the character, who is played by Incyte spokesperson Finola Hughes, that PV is part of a group of rare blood cancers

called myeloproliferative neoplasms, and that there are treatments, but no cure. (Bulik, 5/22)

Stat: This Company Admitted Failure — And The Stock Market Rewarded It
Rather than shunning the company, investors embraced it. Only a small number of them cashed out their shares. (The coauthor of the paper who took responsibility for the error returned the stock, but made the shares a donation.) The IPO, delayed by a few weeks, went forward. And within a few years WntResearch stock went on a surge that to date has left it up nearly 500 percent over 6 1/2 years. In other words: Openness was a risk in the short run but a long-term boon for the company. (Oransky and Marcus, 5/23)

19. Perspectives: FDA Wades Into Pricing Controversy, But Doesn't Have Authority To Actually Fix It

Read recent commentaries about drug-cost issues.

Morning Consult: Is The FDA Digging Its Own Hole On Drug Pricing And Opioids?
The Food and Drug Administration may be digging a huge hole for itself by singling out drug pricing and opioid abuse for priority and focused attention. These two highly-visible and highly-charged issues have been pushed into the political arena. The FDA has, unwisely, agreed to take them on. Both issues are mission impossible for the FDA, which has neither the authority nor the resources to solve either problem. The agency is setting itself up to be perceived as having failed. (Wayne Pines, 5/22)

Bloomberg: A Bipartisan Way To Lower Drug Prices

White House budget director Mick Mulvaney has floated an idea to bring down drug prices that's both promising and -- if other Republicans can be persuaded to go along -- bipartisan. At a recent health-care forum, Mulvaney proposed that drugmakers be required to pay rebates to the government on drugs sold to Medicare beneficiaries, as they do with drugs sold to Medicaid patients. ... In an ideal world, the secretary of Health and Human Services would negotiate on behalf of the 41 million people enrolled in Medicare's Part D prescription drug plan. That kind of purchasing power -- accompanied by the right not to cover a drug it deems too expensive -- would give the department great leverage. Unfortunately, Congress not only forbids such negotiation, it requires that Medicare pay for all medicines approved by the Food and Drug Administration. (5/22)

Stat: Clinical Trial Participants Should Have A Say In New Drug Pricing

People who volunteer to participate in clinical trials of new drugs provide a valuable service to pharmaceutical companies and to the rest of us. In return, I think that they

should have a say in how much these drugs will cost when they hit the market. Not only would that honor their service, but it would also provide a patient-centered mechanism to lower the price of new drugs. (Spencer Phillips Hey, 5/18)

Bloomberg: Amgen Can Shrug Off Its Bone-Drug Risks

With promising trial results and an FDA approval seemingly near, Amgen Inc.'s osteoporosis drug Evenity was expected to contribute at least something to the company's top line this year. But Amgen on Sunday evening reported the drug raised unexpected heart-safety concerns. Now the best hope is that its FDA approval will only be pushed to next year and that its commercial opportunity will merely be limited, not eliminated. Otherwise, it may not be worth the effort to keep seeking approval. (Max Nisen, 5/22)

Forbes: New Taxes Won't Lower Drug Prices

Prescription drug prices continue to be a hot political issue, with the Trump administration preparing to release an action plan as soon as repeal and replace legislation clears Congress. Mick Mulvaney, who heads the White House budget office and is participating in the talks, floated an idea last week that should quickly be crossed off the list of policy ideas. (Grace-Marie Turner, 5/18)

Stat: Will PhRMA's New Membership Criteria Help?

Earlier this month, PhRMA — the trade group representing innovator pharmaceutical companies — announced a set of new membership criteria. Going forward, PhRMA members will need to meet certain standards regarding their investment in R&D. PhRMA may have felt it needed to take action to restore public confidence in the industry and to constrain the bad press its members have been receiving on the drug pricing front. In my view, the new rules miss the mark. (Rachel Sachs, 5/22)

Bloomberg: Amazon's Long Shadow Falls On Pharmacies

It's hard to think of an industry Amazon.com Inc. isn't currently trying to conquer, or at least thinking of conquering. Pharmacies might be next. According to a CNBC report, Amazon is considering a leap into the prescription-drug business. It wouldn't be easy, but the industry and its investors shouldn't dismiss the threat. (Max Nisen, 5/17)

JAMA: Pharmaceutical Marketing For Rare Diseases

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) draws a distinction between direct-to-consumer advertising of specific drug products, which it regulates, and advertisements intended to create disease awareness, which it does not. Other nations, including the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, that ban direct-to-consumer marketing permit disease awareness efforts. Challenges arise when disease awareness efforts are made for conditions for which only 1 approved drug product is available; in this case,

awareness will boost the sales of a specific drug, and several nations, include the United States, selectively regulate this type of advertising. Recently, a novel form of disease awareness promotion, through a daytime soap opera, raised questions about the role and regulation of this form of marketing. (Sham Mailankody and Vinay Prasad, 5/18)

CityBeat Cincinnati: November Ballot Issue Leaves Lower Drug Prices Up To Ohioans
This November, Ohio voters will decide on a referendum that sounds like a sure thing for passage: lower drug prices. No, this isn't a follow-up to last year's 2010s marijuana measure, which failed anyway. The discount would only apply to drugs purchased by state employees and retirees and through state programs like Medicaid. An estimated 3.7 million Ohioans, close to a third of the state's population, would directly benefit. (James McNair, 5/22)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

20. Different Takes On Doing The Math: Trying To Add Up 'Trumponomics,' The Trump Budget's 'Best New Idea'

Opinion writers take a hard look at how health and safety net programs fare in the Trump administration's proposed budget plan.

Los Angeles Times: Surprise, Surprise: Trump's Budget Punishes The Sick And The Poor While Rewarding The Wealthy

One factor holding back economic growth is that too many working-age Americans have fallen out of the labor force. The administration's proposed budget for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1 tries to tackle that problem, as well it should. But rather than grapple with some of the challenges underlying the disappearance of millions of Americans from the workforce — in particular, the technological changes and globalization that have caused so many blue-collar and middle-class jobs to evaporate, and the gap between the education and training Americans have received and the skills demanded by today's employers — the Trump budget seeks to force people back into the workforce by making it harder to obtain or keep food stamps, Medicaid and Social Security disability benefits, while reducing federal support for welfare and children's health. (5/23)

The Washington Post: Trumponomics: The Philosophy That It Doesn't Suck Enough To Be Poor

For months, pundits and political advisers have tried to figure out what "Trumponomics" really stands for. Even President Trump himself struggled to characterize it, saying, "It

really has to do with self-respect as a nation.” Now that we have the president’s budget in hand, we have a more definitive answer: Trumponomics — like Ryanonomics — is based on the principle that living in poverty doesn’t suck quite enough. That is, more people would be motivated to become rich if only being poor weren’t so much fun. (Catherine Rampell, 5/23)

The New York Times: Trump’s Budget Doesn’t Make Sense

Yes, Republicans have a blind spot when it comes to acknowledging that revenues must be a part of the fix. But to their credit, many Republicans — including, notably, Paul Ryan, the speaker of the House — have made the case for why we have to reform our largest entitlement programs, including Social Security and Medicare (though there has recently been a disquieting silence on the topic). And many Republicans are taking the responsible position that tax reform should at least be revenue neutral. Democrats, many of whom too often act as demagogues on entitlement reform, are clear that taxes must increase (though they also must stop pretending it is just millionaires who will be affected). They also have been admirable in their commitment to the pay-as-you-go principle in recent major legislation, which at least keeps us from digging the hole deeper. (Maya MacGuineas, 5/23)

The New York Times: Why Work Requirement Became A Theme Of The Trump Budget
The new White House budget proposal is built on a deep-rooted conservative belief: The government should help those who are willing to work, and cull from benefit rolls those who aren’t. That emphasis on work underlies deep cuts and proposed changes to food stamps, cash assistance and health benefits for the poor in a budget that boosts spending for the military and border security. Expect the poor to work in exchange for aid, the White House argues, and antipoverty programs will work better while costing the government less. (Emily Badger, 5/24)

USA Today: Trump Budget's Best New Idea

Since the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993, American parents working for companies with at least 50 employees have had a right to 12 weeks of unpaid leave after the birth or adoption of a child. But many don’t take advantage of that option for the simple reason that they can’t afford to go that long without a paycheck. The Trump administration, at the urging of first daughter Ivanka Trump, has included in its budget released Tuesday a plan for paid medical leave of up to six weeks. (5/23)

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USA Today: Trump's Parental Plan Will Hurt

President Trump’s budget includes a proposal for six weeks of mandated paid family

leave for new parents. Despite its superficial appeal, this idea is likely to harm families more than it helps. The initial Trump proposal, floated in September, would have limited mandated leave to mothers, thereby likely engaging in unconstitutional sex discrimination. Key aspects of the new plan are still unclear. But it avoids legal problems by covering fathers, too. Yet it has serious flaws, nonetheless. (Ilya Somin, 5/23)

Bloomberg: Trump's DOA Budget Has Two Silver Linings
It also breaks Trump's campaign commitments to spare Social Security and Medicaid from budget cuts. Budget Director Mick Mulvaney explained this problem away (with Trump in Israel) by asserting in a Monday night briefing that proposals in the plan to cut Social Security disability benefits don't count because they're not retirement payments. (Albert R. Hunt, 5/23)

The Kansas City Star: Trump Budget Replicates Disastrous Kansas Approach. This Won't End Well.
But tax cuts were only one half of the [Gov. Sam] Brownback experiment. Aided by conservatives in the Legislature, Kansas eviscerated the state's social safety net: privatizing Medicaid, imposing new restrictions on welfare benefits, insisting on a tough food stamp work requirement. Humiliating the poor seemed to be a particular focus. For a time, the state told welfare recipients they could withdraw only \$25 at a time from an automated teller machine, a decision that prompted anger and derision across the nation before it was repealed. (5/23)

21. Viewpoints: The Rule Of Law And Subsidies; Anticipating CBO's Score On The GOP Health Plan

A selection of opinions on health care from around the country.

Bloomberg: Rule Of Law Actually Applies To Democrats, Too
Yes. Congress can mandate subsidies without also mandating a funding source. Medicaid is another example. This is crazy, but there it is. For once the Constitution is admirably clear on how the executive branch should handle this quandary: "No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time." The law appropriated no money for these cost-sharing reduction payments. But the Obama administration went ahead and paid them anyway. (Megan McArdle, 5/23)

The New York Times: How To Read The C.B.O. Score Of The Health Bill Like An Expert

Today, the Congressional Budget Office will issue important numbers about the House-passed version of the American Health Care Act, the Republican bill to repeal and replace portions of the Affordable Care Act. Although the budget office had analyzed an early version of the bill, the House on May 4 took the unusual step of voting before the budget office could gauge how several last-minute amendments might affect the deficit or the number of uninsured. (Margot Sanger-Katz, 5/24)

RealClear Health: Why Nutrition Standards And Policies Should Continue
The U.S. Department of Agriculture said recently it will delay the implementation of school lunch rules aimed at lowering the amount of sodium and raising the whole grain content of meals served to kids. At the same time, the Food and Drug Administration announced it will delay for one year the implementation of Obama administration rules to require calorie labels on menus and prepared food displays. (Deborah A. Cohen, 5/24)

WBUR: America's Food Access Problem Starts On The Farm
Given that we're tangled in knots over how to pay for health care, it's remarkable that food and farm policy isn't more in the public's mind. Heads of hunger programs and food banks have begun to grasp the obvious; as one told WBUR, "food is medicine, food is health," with good health impossible in the absence of nutritious eating. (Rich Barlow, 5/23)

San Jose Mercury News: Single-Payer Detracting From Big Medi-Cal Fight
Sen. Ricardo Lara's single-payer legislation was a non-starter in California from day one, even before it was given an eye-popping \$400 billion price tag. ... It's merely an exercise in politics, which is all well and good except that it detracts from a far more important California health care issue: Can the state fight off President Trump's inhumane effort to slash the nation's Medicaid budget by more than \$880 billion through 2026? (5/23)

Stat: Risk Scores For Preventing Heart Disease, Stroke Must Take The Long View
Back in 1998, researchers with the legendary Framingham Heart Study created the first heart risk calculator. Using answers to questions about age, cholesterol and blood pressure levels, tobacco use, and the presence of diabetes, it estimated an individual's risk of having a heart attack or stroke over the next 10 years. Since then, this calculator has been revised and many others have been developed, including ones that extend the time horizon out to an individual's lifetime. Yet much to our surprise, the use of these single-point-in-time risk calculators does little to reduce the risk of heart attack or stroke compared with not using such calculators. (Kunal N. Karmali and Mark Huffman, 5/23)

On the Ground: Our Teeth Are Making Us Sick

The left side of Jacquelyn Garcia's face throbbed fiercely. She had tried taking Tylenol and Excedrin for the pain, but threw them up. On a Monday morning straight after working the night shift as a custodian, she rushed to the N.Y.U. emergency dental clinic. Here a student delivered the verdict: decay so deep it had reached the nerve. The tooth needed to be pulled. (Zoe Greenberg, 5/23)

Cleveland Plain Dealer: Cleveland Must Do Far More To Address Lead Hazards In Homes

Lead poisoning maims young minds. It steals kids' futures. For too long, Mayor Frank Jackson and his top staff have failed to confront that reality or instill a sense of urgency or direction to city officials to crack down systematically on landlords with toxic housing. (5/23)

The New York Times: Vermont's D.I.Y. Approach On Marijuana

Vermont is on the verge of becoming the ninth state to legalize the recreational use of marijuana, but, being Vermont, it is taking an earthier, grow-it-yourself approach — one that could become a model for others. (5/24)

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Sent: Tuesday, June 20, 2017 6:47 AM

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A black banner with white text. On the left is the KHN logo with 'KAISER HEALTH NEWS' underneath. To the right of the logo is the text 'Morning Briefing' in a large font, followed by '= A' and another '= A' on separate lines. Below the banner, on a grey background, is the date 'Tuesday, June 20, 2017' and the text 'Check Kaiser Health News online for the latest headlines'.

NOTE TO READERS

DON'T MISS IT! KHN has launched a new Facebook group on navigating aging and will hold a live chat today at noon. Judith Graham, our Navigating Aging columnist, will be joined by geriatrician Dr. Lee Ann Lindquist to answer all your questions about the topic. Tune in here.

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From Kaiser Health News:

KAISER HEALTH NEWS ORIGINAL STORIES

1. Despite A Growing Appetite, Buffet-Style Flat-Fee Clinics Shutter In Seattle

A small number of medical practices have been moving to "direct primary care," in which patients pay a monthly retainer for unlimited services. But the collapse of Qliance in Seattle may portend problems with the business model. (Michelle Andrews, 6/20)

2. Political Cartoon: 'Sight Unseen?'

Kaiser Health News provides a fresh take on health policy developments with "Political Cartoon: 'Sight Unseen?'" by Steve Sack, The Minneapolis Star Tribune.

Here's today's health policy haiku:

STILL 'GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER'?

Prescription costs soar,
White House consults with Pharma.
Foul fox guarding fowl.

- Ernest R. Smith

If you have a health policy haiku to share, please [Contact Us](#) and let us know if you want us to include your name. Keep in mind that we give extra points if you link back to a KHN original story.

Summaries Of The News:

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HEALTH LAW

3. McConnell Keeps Foot On The Gas With Eye On Ambitious Health Law Deadline

Republican leaders are still pushing to get a vote before Congress goes on recess for the July Fourth holiday. But it's unclear whether they have enough "yeses" to pass the legislation.

The Wall Street Journal: Senate GOP Plans Health-Care Vote Next Week

Senate GOP leaders have set a timeline to vote next week on legislation to repeal large chunks of the Affordable Care Act, even though they don't yet appear to have secured enough support to pass it. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) is intent on keeping pressure on Senate Republicans to move quickly on the bill rolling back and replacing much of the 2010 health law, lawmakers and GOP aides said. The push for a quick vote before the weeklong July 4 recess could backfire, however, as some conservative and centrist Republicans have expressed concern about the emerging shape of the legislation. (Armour and Peterson, 6/19)

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Politico: Sources: Senate GOP Prepares For Obamacare Repeal Vote Next Week

Senate Republicans are preparing to vote on Obamacare repeal next week, according to multiple sources familiar with the negotiations, potentially leaving rank-and-file lawmakers with no more than a week to review legislation that would affect millions of Americans and one-sixth of the U.S. economy. Senators are expected to see the text of the bill as soon as the end of this week, those sources said, provided this week's work goes smoothly. The timeline could change based on the response from individual senators toward the proposal at party meetings, but Republicans are increasingly optimistic they can hold a vote next week if this week's lunch talks go well. (Everett and Haberkorn, 6/19)

The Hill: A Frantic Scramble Before Possible Healthcare Vote Next Week

McConnell is walking a tightrope in seeking to win over centrists and conservatives for a Senate version of the House-passed American Health Care Act — which is being negotiated entirely behind closed doors. (Bolton, 6/20)

The Hill: Senate GOP Leader: Health Vote Expected Next Week

"I believe we're going to vote before the Fourth of July recess on a healthcare plan, a repeal and replacement of ObamaCare," Barrasso, a member of GOP leadership, said on Fox News. "Every Republican is trying to get to yes," Barrasso said while noting, "There are some differences of opinion on specific details of this." (Sullivan, 6/19)

Roll Call: Senate Obamacare Repeal Vote Possible Next Week

The full text of the bill to overhaul the U.S. health care system is expected to be released this week, lobbyists say, and a full report from the Congressional Budget

Office could come early next week. That analysis is required for a Senate vote in order to ensure that the legislation complies with the fast-track budget procedure known as reconciliation that the GOP is using to advance the bill. (Williams, 6/19)

The New York Times: The Senate Is Close To A Health Care Bill, But Do Republicans Have The Votes?

The 52 Republican senators have been meeting several times a week behind closed doors to develop a bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. At least 50 of them must be on board for the bill to pass, and they could try as soon as next week. (Andrews and Park, 6/19)

Boston Globe: Susan Collins Won't Back Down On Health Care, And That's A Problem For Mitch McConnell

Collins and several other key moderates are exerting outsized influence on the debate — and they show little sign of backing down... The predicament is so thorny that McConnell is keeping the deliberations under a deep wrap of secrecy, hoping to delay a public split over specific aspects of the legislation that could ruin the negotiations. (McGrane, 6/19)

4. Lacking Real Power To Alter GOP Bill, Democrats Try To Throw Wrench In Process Itself

As Republicans race toward a self-imposed deadline to vote on their legislation, Democrats take steps to slow down work in the Senate.

The New York Times: Senate Democrats Try To Gum Up Works Over Affordable Care Act Repeal

Democrats vowed on Monday to slow work in the Senate to a crawl to protest the secrecy surrounding the Republican effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, as Republican leaders raced to prepare a bill for a vote as soon as next week. Without the votes to stop the majority party from passing a bill, Democrats can only draw attention to the way Republicans are creating their bill — behind closed doors without a single hearing or public bill-drafting session. (Kaplan and Pear, 6/19)

The Associated Press: Dems' Motions, Speeches Knock GOP Health Bill For Secrecy
They threatened to slow the Senate's work with procedural motions. They forced the chamber's top Republican to swat aside reasonable sounding requests, like holding committee hearings. And they delivered speech after speech after speech. Democrats used all those tools Monday evening to try drawing attention to the Senate GOP's secretive effort to craft a bill scuttling President Barack Obama's health care law and push it through the chamber by next week's end. Their largely symbolic effort was likely

to have little or no impact on how Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell handles the measure. (Fram, 6/19)

USA Today: Democrats To Slow-Walk Senate Business Over Health Care Bill
Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said Democrats will object to requests for "unanimous consent" to set aside rules and expedite proceedings. The procedural move is a tactic the minority party can use to draw out the legislative process for days, forcing Republicans to jump through procedural hurdles to get anything done. The goal, he said, is to refer the GOP health care bill to a committee where it can be debated and amended publicly. Republicans are writing their bill "under the cover of darkness because they're ashamed of it," he said. (Gaudiano, 6/19)

Politico: Democrats To Halt Senate Business Over Obamacare Repeal
Holding the floor on Monday evening won't change the timing of a health care vote. And Democrats are unlikely to be able to force the House bill to committee or delay it. But it will force Republicans to answer for what Democrats say is a rushed process and bad policy. Some Senate Democrats also are preparing to block lengthy committee hearings beginning on Tuesday, although Democratic leaders have not announced or confirmed that decision. Any senator can block a hearing from extending past the first two hours of the Senate's day. But when partisan tensions are high, the hearing requests are sometimes denied to make a point. (Haberkorn, 6/19)

Roll Call: Schumer Wants All-Senate Gathering On Health Care
Left-leaning interest groups and critics of the House-passed health care bill (HR 1628) are pressuring Democrats to be bolder in their opposition to the measure. (Raman, 6/16)

Politico: Some Dems Reluctant To Shut Down Senate Committees Over Obamacare
Even as Senate Democrats began a Monday night talk-a-thon designed to spotlight the GOP's still-secret Obamacare repeal plan, some of their own questioned the party's other potential procedural tactic to block committees from meeting this week. The skepticism within the caucus underscores the risk facing Senate Democrats as they launch an all-out battle against a Republican health care bill they have had zero power to influence. (Schor and Kim, 6/19)

Bloomberg: Democrats Try To Revive Fight Against Republican Health Bill
"If Republicans won't relent and debate their health-care bill in the open for the American people to see, then they shouldn't expect business as usual in the Senate," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York. (Litvan and Dennis, 6/19)

The Hill: Dems Threaten To Gum Up Senate Over 'Secret' ObamaCare Bill

Democrats are expected to make a series of unanimous consent requests on Monday evening on the House-passed ObamaCare repeal and replacement bill, including trying to send it to a Senate committee and "forcing Republicans to publicly defend their 'no hearings strategy,' " according to the senior Senate Democratic aide. They have hounded Republicans over their legislation, which is still being hashed out in a series of closed-door meetings. (Carney, 6/19)

Morning Consult: Democrats Aim To Stymie Senate GOP's Health Care Efforts

Senate Democrats have used the same procedural tactic to slow confirmation votes for several of President Donald Trump's nominations, though they were unable to block them entirely. Objecting to unanimous consent forces Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) to go through the cloture process, extending debate on any matter at hand for as many 30 hours. (Reid, 6/19)

Roll Call: Senate Democrats Can't Slow GOP Health Care Bill Once It's Written

[O]nce Republicans finalize amendment language for the measure that houses the GOP plan to revamp the nation's health insurance system, there will not be much debate at all. Schumer and his Democratic colleagues have begun to throw the kitchen sink to drive attention to the secretive nature of the GOP negotiations on the health care bill. (Lesniewski, 6/20)

The CT Mirror: Dems — Including CT's Senators — Plan To Disrupt Senate Over Health Care Plan

Democrats, with the help of Connecticut's senators, plan to jam up the Senate this week to bring attention to Republican attempts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care act. Beginning Monday evening, the Democrats will use Senate procedures to try to block business both on and off the Senate floor. They say Republicans are using Senate procedures to keep the crafting of their health care bill from the public. (Radelat and Beaudoin, 6/19)

5. 'Ashamed:' The New Buzz Word Democrats Embrace As They Step Up Attacks Against GOP

Senate Democrats are lobbing a variety of criticisms at the health law efforts by colleagues on the other side of the aisle, but a consistent theme is that Republicans don't like their own bill.

The Washington Post: Senate Democrats Intensify Criticism Of Emerging GOP Health Bill

Senate Democrats ramped up opposition Monday to the emerging Republican health-care bill, launching a series of mostly symbolic moves including speeches that went late into the evening and a push to slow other Senate business to a crawl. The aim, Democrats said, was to draw attention to the secretive process Republican leaders are using to craft their bill and argue that the GOP proposals would hurt Americans. The Democrats lack the power to prevent a vote and they don't have the numbers to defeat a bill without Republican defections. So they are focusing this week on nonbinding protests. (Sullivan, 6/19)

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The Hill: Dems Step Up Attacks On GOP ObamaCare Bill

Senate Democrats are stepping up their attacks on the GOP's push to repeal and replace ObamaCare as the legislative battle enters a critical two-week stretch. Democrats can't block a healthcare bill on their own, but are threatening to shut down the Senate in retaliation for Republicans negotiating their legislation in a string of closed-door GOP-only meetings. The move, they hope, will put Republicans on the defense as they look to force a vote as soon as next week, when lawmakers will leave for the July 4th recess. (Carney, 6/19)

The Hill: Franken Accuses Trump Of Flip-Flopping On House Healthcare Bill

Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) became the latest Democratic senator to use President Trump's own words against him on Monday evening. "It went from great to mean. In the Rose Garden it was 'great.' Now just a few weeks later that same great bill is 'mean,'" Franken said from the Senate floor. Several Democratic senators have referenced Trump's comments made to Senate Republicans during a closed-door meeting last week, during which he knocked the House bill and urged senators to be more generous. (Carney, 6/19)

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Denver Post: Diana DeGette Lambastes GOP Health Care Bill, Trump Budget Cuts As Bad For Colorado Kids

U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette on Monday called for a stop to the "hyperpartisan" politics she says are fueling the GOP health care bill that — along with President Donald Trump's proposed budget cuts — would slash money from programs that help more than half a million Colorado children...Her comments come as the U.S. Senate is working on its version of the U.S. House-passed American Health Care Act, Republicans' response to the president's promise to repeal and replace Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act. Congressional Democrats have lambasted their GOP counterparts for not holding hearings on the bill, which Senate Majority Leader Mitch

McConnell, R-Kentucky, has said he hopes to have passed before the Senate's July 4 recess. (Paul, 6/19)

New Hampshire Union Leader: NH Senators Opposing 'Trumpcare' Bill Before Its Release

U.S. Sen. Maggie Hassan, D-NH, said Monday that Senate Republican leaders are working on an Obamacare replacement plan behind closed doors because they know the emerging "Trumpcare" bill will be widely unpopular. "What we're concerned about is we're hearing we may not see this secret bill until they put it on the floor for a final vote," she said. Hassan and U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-NH, were at opposite ends of the state to promote the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion in the fight against the opioid and heroin epidemic. Shaheen visited Frisbie Memorial Hospital in Rochester. Hassan toured Serenity Place with its director, Stephanie Bergeron, and Manchester Fire Chief Daniel Goonan. (Tuohy, 6/19)

The Washington Post Fact Checker: Pelosi's Claim That An Estimated 1.8 Million Jobs Will Be Lost Through AHCA

Recently attacking the American Health Care Act, the House GOP replacement for Obamacare, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi made a new assertion – that it would cost 1.8 million jobs. She seemed to be turning a standard GOP attack line on its head – that the Affordable Care Act was a job killer. In 2010, Pelosi also famously once predicted that Obamacare would "create 4 million jobs, 400,000 jobs almost immediately." She was citing an optimistic study at the time, and economists will argue forever whether the law spurred employment or was a drag on it. But recent research indicates that, contrary to the spin by both sides, the ACA had minimal effect on employment, hours of work and compensation. (Kessler, 6/20)

6. GOP Senators Working On Health Bill Weigh Deeper Reductions In Medicaid

The group, which is working in secret, has reportedly asked the Congressional Budget Office to score a proposal that would cut the House bill's growth rate for Medicaid funding.

The Hill: Senate GOP Considers Deeper Medicaid Cuts Than House Bill

A leading option in the Senate's ObamaCare repeal-and-replace debate is to make even deeper cuts to Medicaid spending than the bill passed by the House, according to lobbyists and aides. The proposal would start out the growth rate for a new cap on Medicaid spending at the same levels as the House bill, but then drop to a lower growth

rate that would cut spending more, known as CPI-U, starting in 2025, the sources said. (Sullivan, 6/19)

CNN: Moderates May Lose A Major Fight On Medicaid

While the idea might help convince conservatives like Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas or Mike Lee of Utah to view a final proposal more favorably, it could be problematic for moderates like Portman or Sen. Dean Heller of Nevada, who faces re-election in 2018. A spokesman told CNN Portman remains opposed to dropping the growth rate below the level of the House bill, which along with ending Medicaid expansion would reduce spending on the program by \$800 billion over 10 years. Several other more moderate members of the conference have voiced concern over the idea. (Mattingly and Fox, 6/19)

The Hill: Hospital Group Warns Of Serious Harm From Medicaid Cuts

The American Hospital Association warned Senate Republicans Monday against including large cuts to Medicaid in its healthcare bill. "Medicaid serves our most vulnerable populations, including Americans with chronic conditions such as cancer, the elderly and disabled individuals in need of long-term services and support, and already pays providers significantly less than the cost of providing care," the AHA wrote in a letter Monday. The House healthcare bill's proposed \$834 billion in Medicaid cuts would have "serious negative consequences for communities across America," AHA said. (Hellmann, 6/19)

7. Firebrand Ted Cruz Finding Shades Of Gray In Previously Black-And-White Health Debate

Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) has emerged as a central figure in Republicans' health law efforts and is cautiously embracing a one-time foreign word: compromise. In other news, conservatives have thrown up some red flags on changes to the American Health Care Act, staff departures uproot the Senate's ambitious agenda, health care groups that have been shut out of the process take their message directly to the American people, and more.

Texas Tribune: Ted Cruz On Health Care Overhaul: "Of Course I'll Compromise"

Five years ago, Ted Cruz was running for an open U.S. Senate seat in Texas. One of his biggest talking points: repealing President Obama's 2010 health care law... Yet as U.S. Senate Republicans hash out how to unwind Obamacare behind closed doors, the world is not so black and white anymore for the junior senator from Texas, who is playing a central role in those negotiations that are virtually certain not to lead to a measure that repeals every word of Obamacare. (Livingston, 6/19)

The Hill: RSC Warns Senate: Healthcare Changes May 'Jeopardize' Bill

The Republican Study Committee (RSC) is sending up a warning flare to Senate Republicans over changes to the ObamaCare repeal-and-replace bill, warning that the alterations "may jeopardize final passage in the House." The RSC, which the largest bloc of conservatives in Congress, has drafted a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) raising "serious concerns" with the direction of the Senate's healthcare legislation. (Roubein, 6/19)

CQ Roll Call: Senate GOP Staff Departures Undermine Health And Tax Agenda

Key Republican staffers are departing Capitol Hill now that the GOP controls Congress and the White House, raising questions about how the party will advance its ambitious agenda to overhaul the U.S. tax code and health care system. Senior personnel for the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee have departed and lobbyists say others are preparing to leave the Senate Finance Committee. A handful of health policy staffers for members on those panels have also left for jobs off Capitol Hill and a key individual on the Senate Budget Committee was recently nominated for a senior post at the State Department. (Williams, 6/19)

Marketplace: On Health Care, Consumer Groups Have No Seat At The Table

The Senate is working to get its own version of the American Health Care Act ready before it goes on recess July 3. Only a small group of senators is working on it, without the input of many other people. This has been frustrating for some consumer groups, who say they've been locked out. (Ben-Achour, 6/19)

The New York Times: C.B.O. Head, Who Prizes Nonpartisanship, Finds Work Under G.O.P. Attack

When much of Washington was glued to the testimony of former F.B.I. director James B. Comey this month, Keith Hall, the head of the Congressional Budget Office, was one of the few who averted their eyes from televisions. For Mr. Hall, avoiding political spectacles — anything politically partisan, really — has become second nature. On his commute to Capitol Hill, he tunes out the buzz of partisan chatter on talk radio. At home, cable news is a no-no. And because friends sometimes try to talk to him about politics, he has become a master in the art of the dodge. But the noise may soon be impossible to ignore. (Rappeport, 6/19)

Sacramento Bee: California Is Worried About Losing Health Care

A new statewide poll found that Golden State supporters of the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, outnumber opponents by more than 2 to 1. About two-thirds of Californians say they support the law, including 45 percent who do so strongly, while just 26 percent say they're against it, according to the poll released late Monday

by UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies and done for the California Health Care Foundation. (Cadelago, 6/19)

San Jose Mercury News: Poll: Californians Fear Losing Coverage In Obamacare Reform

As the Republican-led U.S. Senate prepares to vote — possibly by next week — to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, a new poll shows that 56 percent of Californians worry that they or someone in their family will lose health insurance coverage if the law, commonly called Obamacare, is dismantled. The poll, by UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies, comes at a time when a record number of Golden State residents — 65 percent — now support the Affordable Care Act, said Mark DiCamillo, who directs the Berkeley IGS poll. (Seipel, 6/19)

MARKETPLACE

8. State Officials Scramble To Woo Insurers Back Into ACA Marketplaces

In Washington state, an insurer that was going to pull out of the exchanges reversed course after "repeated discussions" with state officials. And in Iowa, a company that had been considering leaving the individual marketplace announced it will stay in it.

The Wall Street Journal: Insurer Reverses ACA Exit Plan In One Of Two Washington State Counties

Washington state will have an insurer offering Affordable Care Act plans next year in one of two counties that earlier appeared poised to have no coverage through the health law's online marketplace. Separately, Medica, a nonprofit insurer, said Monday it made a regulatory filing signaling that it will offer marketplace plans throughout the state of Iowa next year. Iowa had appeared at risk of having no exchange insurers in most, or even all, of its counties in 2018. Medica, which had earlier said it was considering pulling out of Iowa's marketplace, said in a statement it was seeking an average rate increase of 43.5%. (Wilde Mathews, 6/19)

Seattle Times: Health-Plan Rates In Washington State's Individual Market Could Go Up An Average Of 22%

Health-insurance rates in Washington's individual market would increase an average of 22 percent next year based on filings under review by state officials — sparking a new round of partisan finger-pointing. The increases are almost twice the 13.5 percent increase insurers proposed this past year for 2017. Consumer options also would decrease next year for the 300,000 Washingtonians who buy their health coverage in the marketplace for individuals. This year 13 insurers offered 154 plans in Washington's

individual market and nine companies sold plans inside the state exchange created under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare. (Young, 6/19)

The Hill: Washington State Down To One Bare ObamaCare County

Premiera Blue Cross intends to sell plans in a Washington state county that previously looked like it would not have an ObamaCare plan, leaving just one county in the state without an insurer in 2018. Earlier this month, insurance companies filed their rates and their intentions to sell health plans on Washington's ObamaCare market. When the results came in, two counties were bare. (Roubein, 6/19)

The Associated Press: Medica Weighs Staying In Iowa's Health Exchange Next Year
Iowa's last health care insurer to sell policies to individuals statewide through the federal Affordable Care Act said Monday it needs to know more about how the state's insurance market will function next year before making a final promise to stay. Minnesota-based Medica has preliminary plans to sell insurance in Iowa next year in the individual market and expects to make an announcement soon, spokesman Larry Bussey said. (Pitt, 6/19)

Iowa Public Radio: One Affordable Care Act Insurer Intends To Stay In Iowa

It's likely Medica will be the only company selling individual ACA-compliant health insurance statewide in Iowa. It's proposing to increase rates by an average of 43.5 percent. "When you find yourself as the only ones between people getting access to care and people not getting access to care, your view of the situation becomes very different," Medica Vice President Geoff Bartsh said in a written statement. (Sostaric, 6/19)

Des Moines Register: Medica Intends To Stay In Iowa's Health-Insurance Market, At 43% Higher Price

Even after Monday's announcement, Medica still could pull out of the Iowa market, as many experts feared. That could leave no options for up to 72,000 Iowans who now buy their own insurance instead of obtaining it via an employer or government program, such as Medicare or Medicaid. (Leys, 6/19)

Chicago Tribune: Blue Cross Working To Return To Illinois Obamacare Exchange Next Year

Illinois' largest health insurer, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois, is taking steps to return to the Obamacare exchange next year despite uncertainty over the fate of the health care law. The news comes as some insurers in other parts of the country pull out of the marketplace for 2018. In Illinois, insurers have until Wednesday to file proposed rates with the Illinois Department of Insurance. Colleen Miller, a spokeswoman for Blue

Cross, confirmed Monday the insurer is submitting rates and plans for next year. (Schencker, 6/19)

ADMINISTRATION NEWS

9. 'A President Who Simply Does Not Care' About HIV/AIDS: 6 Angered Experts Quit Trump's Panel

The members of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS write that the administration "pushes legislation that will harm people living with HIV and halt or reverse important gains made in the fight against this disease." The White House disputes the former advisers' characterizations. "Well, I mean, respectfully, the president cares tremendously about that and the impact it has," Press Secretary Sean Spicer said.

The Washington Post: Trump 'Simply Does Not Care' About HIV/AIDS, Say 6 Experts Who Just Quit His Advisory Council

The first hints of an uncertain future for the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS came last year, when Donald Trump's presidential campaign refused to meet with advocates for people living with HIV, said Scott Schoettes, a member of the council since 2014. That unease was magnified on Inauguration Day in January, when an official White House website for the Office of National AIDS Policy vanished, Schoettes said. "I started to think, was it going to be useful or wise or would it be possible to work with this administration?" Schoettes told The Washington Post. "Still, I made a decision to stick it out and see what we could do." (Wang, 6/19)

The Hill: Six Resign From Presidential HIV/AIDS Council Because Trump 'Doesn't Care'

Six members of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS have angrily resigned, saying that President Trump doesn't care about HIV. Scott Schoettes, Lucy Bradley-Springer, Gina Brown, Ulysses Burley III, Michelle Ogle and Grissel Granados publicly announced their resignations in a joint letter published in Newsweek titled, "Trump doesn't care about HIV. We're outta here." (Thomsen, 6/17)

MEDICAID

10. Credit Agency Pokes Texas For Failing To Budget Sufficiently For Medicaid Growth

S&P Global Ratings did not downgrade the state's ratings, but criticized the legislature's decision to cut funds by nearly \$2 billion while expecting more people to qualify for the program. Meanwhile, officials in Illinois are still seeking to get beyond an impasse on Medicaid payment formulas for doctors, hospitals and other health care providers.

Houston Chronicle: Texas' Skimpy Medicaid Funding Has Wall Street Worried
Texas' budget-writing season is over, and while the state remains in decent fiscal health, a ratings agency on Monday sounded notes of caution over the Legislature's decision to cut funding for Medicaid, the federally-supported healthcare program for the poor and disabled. S&P Global Ratings saw no reason to downgrade Texas' AAA rating, the highest issued by the agency. Analysts, however, criticized the Legislature's decision to cut funds by \$1.9 billion, despite projections that the state will add recipients in the coming years. (DePillis, 6/19)

Reuters: Illinois Medicaid Payment Boost Talks To Continue: Attorney
Talks over boosting Illinois' lagging payments to Medicaid providers amid the state's budget impasse will continue past a Tuesday deadline initially set by a federal judge, an attorney said on Monday. Earlier this month, U.S. District Court Judge Joan Lefkow directed both sides to file motions on Tuesday if they failed to reach a negotiated solution that would put Illinois in substantial compliance with federal consent decrees on Medicaid, the healthcare program for the poor and disabled. (Pierog, 6/19)

Meanwhile, in a new report on health spending --

Atlanta Journal-Constitution: Georgia Health Spending Among Lowest In U.S.
Spending on health care in Georgia remains below the national average, even though it has increased at a relatively fast clip, according to a new report in HealthAffairs. According to the report, Georgia spent \$10,429 per Medicare enrollee, \$5,199 per Medicaid enrollee, and \$4,406 per enrollee in personal health insurance. (Hart, 6/19)

PHARMACEUTICALS

11. Bristol-Myers' Supreme Court Victory Could Have Far-Reaching Ramifications In Liability Cases

The case centered around whether plaintiffs residing outside of the state who claim they were harmed by the company's blood thinner could join in a lawsuit brought by California residents. "It will extremely limit the notion that large companies can be sued by anyone, anywhere," said one lawyer.

The Associated Press: High Court Sides With Drugmaker In Plavix Lawsuit

The Supreme Court says hundreds of out-state-residents can't sue drugmaker Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. in California state court over adverse reactions to the blood thinner Plavix. The justices ruled 8-1 Monday that there was not a strong enough connection between the claims against the drugmaker and the company's ties to the state. The ruling is a win for Bristol-Myers Squibb and other companies that want to avoid lawsuits in state courts seen as more favorable to plaintiffs. (6/19)

Politico: Supreme Court Ruling In Drug Case Could Have Big Implications For Product Liability

A Supreme Court decision Monday could make it harder for large groups of plaintiffs to sue corporations in state courts for damages caused by manufacturers' products. Bristol-Myers Squibb prevailed in its effort to get the Supreme Court to limit where patients can seek compensation for harm caused by drugs. But the ruling will echo beyond the pharmaceutical industry to potentially affect any liability case in which consumers allege harm caused by a deficient product, including automobiles, tobacco, food and other mass litigation like consumer claims of financial fraud by a company. It could also affect lawsuits against companies being accused of environmental wrongdoing. (Karlin-Smith, 6/19)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

12. Gunshots Second Only To Car Accidents For Cause Of Death For American Children

Each day in the United States, an average of 3.5 people under the age of 18 are shot to death and another 15.5 are treated in a hospital emergency department for a gunshot wound.

The New York Times: A Dire Weekly Total For The U.S.: 25 Children Killed By Guns
Gunshots are the second leading cause of injury-related death in children, exceeded only by car accidents. In a typical week in the United States, 25 children die from bullet wounds. Between 2012 and 2014, an average of 1,297 children under age 18 died each year from firearm injuries. Aside from deaths in the course of law enforcement and other circumstances, there were an average of 693 homicides, 493 suicides and 82 unintentional deaths annually. (Bakalar, 6/19)

Los Angeles Times: Guns Kill Nearly 1,300 Children In The U.S. Each Year And Send Thousands More To Hospitals

The number of child fatalities related to guns is far higher in the U.S. than in any other

high-income country. Another study has reckoned that the U.S. accounts for 91% of all the firearms-related deaths of children under 14 in the world's 23 richest countries. (Healy, 6/19)

13. In Heart Of Opioid Epidemic, Some Hope Harsh Reality Check Can Help Save Lives

A New York coroner offers local students a stark look at the graphic and disturbing ramifications of the opioid crisis. Meanwhile, a study finds a spike in hospital visits because of the epidemic.

The New York Times: From Opioid Epidemic's Front Lines, Filling In The Brutal Back Story

As a county coroner here, Frank Whitelaw has an unusual perspective to share with local students on the opioid crisis. He is the one who examines the bodies. But it is the families of the victims who get to him. "That is the most heart-wrenching part of this job," he said. "I can deal with bodies all day and all night, to a degree, but when you are talking to the family, you feel that raw anguish. It's horrible." (Foderaro, 6/19)

The Washington Post: In Just One Year, Nearly 1.3 Million Americans Needed Hospital Care For Opioid-Related Issues

The coast-to-coast opioid epidemic is swamping hospitals, with government data published Tuesday showing 1.27 million emergency room visits or inpatient stays for opioid-related issues in a single year. The 2014 numbers, the latest available for every state and the District of Columbia, reflect a 64 percent increase for inpatient care and a 99 percent jump for emergency room treatment compared to figures from 2005. Their trajectory likely will keep climbing if the epidemic continues unabated. (Achenbach and Keating, 6/20)

And in other news —

The Associated Press: Few Opioid-Addicted Youth Get Standard Treatment Medication
Only 1 in 4 teens and young adults with opioid addiction receive recommended treatment medication despite having good health insurance, according to a study that suggests doctors are not keeping up with the needs of youth caught up in the worst addiction crisis in U.S. history. "Young people may be dying because they are not getting the treatment they need," said Brendan Saloner, an addiction researcher at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health who wrote an editorial published with the study Monday in JAMA Pediatrics. (6/19)

New Hampshire Public Radio: Uncertainty Around GOP Health Plan Looms Large At N.H. Drug Treatment Center

Serenity Place CEO Stephanie Bergeron said her team is already stretched thin trying to respond to the growing need for substance abuse treatment — and any changes in funding would have serious consequences for the health of both the facility and the people it helps... Sen. Maggie Hassan toured Serenity Place Monday as part of an effort to call attention to the potential consequences that declining health funding might have on local substance use treatment providers. (McDermott, 6/20)

Boston Globe: Officials Balk At Supervised Drug Injection Facility

City councilors expressed concern Monday about a supervised injection facility for drug users — an idea floated by a state lawmaker that has so far been panned by local officials... Opponents have decried the facilities as condoning drug use without an equal effort to address the root causes of addiction, while continuing to let the scourge of the opioid epidemic settle in Boston. (Valencia, 6/20)

Cincinnati Enquirer: Which State Has The Most Opioid-Dependent Patients With Private Insurance?

Kentucky doctors diagnosed more cases of opioid addiction for people privately insured than did doctors in any other state in the nation last year, a new report finds. The report, "America's Opioid Epidemic: Data on the Privately Insured Population," gives an indication of how the opioid and heroin epidemic affects people of all different backgrounds. (DeMio, 6/19)

The Washington Post: Baltimore City Running Low On Opioid Overdose Remedy

Baltimore health officials are running low on naloxone, the opioid overdose reversal drug used hundreds of times by bystanders in the past couple of years to save lives. Leana Wen, the city health commissioner, said demand has jumped significantly amid the drug epidemic, and the health department needs funding for more supplies. "We are rationing," she said. "We're deciding who is at the highest risk and giving it to them."

30 (Cohn, 6/19)

Health News Florida: New Florida Law Aims To Stop Fentanyl Dealers, Some Question If It Will Work

Under a newly signed Florida law, Possession of just four grams of the synthetic drug fentanyl can land a person in jail for a minimum of 3 years. Some are pushing back against the mandatory minimum sentence. But others claim it makes sense when one considers that that same amount—just four ounces—is enough to kill a room full of people. (McCarthy, 6/19)

14. Invention To Stop Blood Loss, Born On The Battlefield, Could Save Lives Of Civilians In Trauma Cases

The device "is not the second coming of Jesus Christ," said David Spencer, the president of the company that makes the device. "But it gives the surgeons a chance where maybe there wasn't a chance before." In other public health news: the human genome, Zika, back pain, suicide, election stress and more.

The New York Times: Inspired By War Zones, Balloon Device May Save Civilians From Fatal Blood Loss

A high school senior mowed down by a car with other pedestrians in last month's Times Square attack was hemorrhaging internally and transfusions could not keep up with the blood loss. Doctors and nurses at NYC Health & Hospitals/Bellevue raced to save the student, Jessica Williams of Dunellen, N.J., who suffered severe injuries to her legs, abdomen and pelvis. But her pulse skyrocketed to 150. Her blood pressure dropped to 40/30. "She was about to go into cardiac arrest," said Dr. Marko Bukur, a trauma surgeon. (Grady, 6/19)

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Stat: Psst, The Human Genome Was Never Completely Sequenced

What insiders know, however, is not well-understood by the rest of us, who take for granted that each A, T, C, and G that makes up the DNA of all 23 pairs of human chromosomes has been completely worked out. When scientists finished the first draft of the human genome, in 2001, and again when they had the final version in 2003, no one lied, exactly. FAQs from the National Institutes of Health refer to the sequence's "essential completion," and to the question, "Is the human genome completely sequenced?" they answer, "Yes," with the caveat — that it's "as complete as it can be" given available technology. (Begley, 6/20)

Stat: Can Zika Virus Infection Attack The Brains Of Newborns?

Zika infection in the womb can damage a fetal brain. But can the insidious virus also attack the still-developing brains of newborns? The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases said Monday that scientists would try to answer that question by carrying out the first large such study to be funded by the agency. Several hundred infants in Guatemala, where Zika is still circulating, will be examined for at least a year and will be compared with another group of children younger than 5. (Branswell, 6/19)

NPR: Back Pain Got You Down? Yoga Is A Good Alternative To Physical Therapy

If you're tired of popping pain medicine for your lower back pain, yoga may be a good alternative. New research finds that a yoga class designed specifically for back pain

can be as safe and effective as physical therapy in easing pain. The yoga protocol was developed by researchers at Boston Medical Center with input from yoga teachers, doctors and physical therapists. (Aubrey, 6/20)

San Jose Mercury News: Facebook's High-Stakes Dilemma Over Suicide Videos
Social media companies such as Facebook and Twitter's Periscope have made videos simpler for people to share online, but now these companies are in a race against time to respond quickly to posts depicting self harm — before they go viral. Balancing the risks of suicide contagion with free speech, newsworthiness and other factors, these companies' complex decisions to leave a video up or pull it down can mean the difference between life and death for people attempting suicide. (Wong, 6/19)

Health News Florida: Researcher: Election Stress Can Impact Health
The 2016 presidential election generated a lot of stress. But for those in ethnic and religious groups in the middle of the debate, the stress could be affecting their health. David R. Williams is a Harvard professor of public health who recently published an article on the subject in the New England Journal of Medicine. (Ochoa, 6/19)

NPR: 'Scientist-Patient' And Her Husband Race To Find A Cure For Her Rare Brain Disease
In 2010, Sonia Vallabh watched her mom, Kamni Vallabh, die in a really horrible way. First, her mom's memory started to go, then she lost the ability to reason. Sonia says it was like watching someone get unplugged from the world. By the end, it was as if she was stuck between being awake and asleep. She was confused and uncomfortable all the time. "Even when awake, was she fully or was she really? And when asleep, was she really asleep?" says Sonia. The smart, warm, artistic Kamni – just 51 years old = 2 was disappearing into profound dementia. (Bichell, 6/19)

NPR: Half Of People Surveyed Don't Know Where To Find The Defibrillator At Work
Do you know where your workplace's automated external defibrillator is located? About half of all U.S. employees don't, according to the results of an American Heart Association survey. The survey also found that workers in the hospitality and service industry, which includes hotels and restaurants, were less likely to know the location of their workplace's AED. About 66 percent of them didn't know where it was. Workers in schools and other education facilities were the most likely to be able to find it: About 61 percent said they knew the AED's location. (Columbus, 6/19)

The Star Tribune: Meal Sizes, Sugary Drinks Closely Linked To Childhood Obesity
Fulkerson's research started five years ago with a comparison of 160 families, half of whom received training called HOME Plus, which involved 10 monthly family counseling and meal-planning sessions, as well as five telephone calls to help parents

set healthy goals... Following up on the study results and figuring out which counseling messages had the greatest impact was critical, Fulkerson said, before some version of the HOME Plus training could be offered clinically to families outside of controlled research. (Olson, 6/19)

Tampa Bay Times: Researchers: Coconut Oil May Not Be As Healthy As You Think
The substance, often lauded to ease digestion, boost metabolism and promote weight loss overall, has been unveiled by a June 15 American Heart Association report to be anything but heart healthy. In the report, the AHA says that coconut oil is almost made entirely of saturated fat — 82 percent, to be exact. (Putterman, 6/19)

The New York Times: The High-Tech Device That's Like A Bouncer For Mosquitoes
Dotted around Houston, hidden in overgrown backyards and piles of old tires, are what look like 10 tiny models of Hollywood's iconic Capitol Records building. They are full of recording gear, but not to capture the vocals of Frank Sinatra or the Beastie Boys. These high-tech devices catch mosquitoes — though not in big batches, like typical traps. They catch them one by one, each in its own compartment, after inspecting each mosquito's wing beats to be sure it's a species that researchers want. (McNeil, 6/19)

STATE WATCH

15. State Highlights: Boston Mayor's Budget Includes More Mental Health Clinicians To Aid Police Responders; Mo. House Panel OKs Amended Abortion Restrictions

Media outlets report on news from Massachusetts, Missouri, Michigan, Georgia, Kansas, Illinois, Connecticut, Washington, Minnesota and California.

WBUR: Boston Seeks 4 More Mental Health Clinicians With Budget Request
Boston Mayor Marty Walsh on Monday upped his fiscal year 2018 budget request, seeking funding for four additional mental health clinicians... According to a statement from Walsh's office, the four new members of the Boston Emergency Services Team would "expand the program's success [citywide] in diverting people from arrest to mental health resources." (Swasey, 6/19)

KCUR: Missouri House Committee Passes Amended Version Of Senate Abortion Bill
Unsatisfied with the extent of the Senate's new proposed abortion restrictions, a Missouri House committee restored some provisions Monday, including one that gives the attorney general the ability to enforce any abortion law at any time. Republicans on the House Committee for Children and Families said they added back the provisions,

which had been stripped from the bill the Senate passed last week as a means of protecting against Democratic filibusters, because they didn't want to be a rubber stamp for the Senate. (Griffin, 6/20)

ProPublica: In Flint Water Crisis, Could Involuntary Manslaughter Charges Actually Lead To Prison Time?

Last week, Michigan's top prosecutor announced that five officials, including the state's Health Department head Nick Lyon, will face charges of involuntary manslaughter for a death resulting from the Flint water crisis. It's a move virtually unheard of in modern American history; legal experts couldn't point to a single case in which government officials were charged in a citizen's death because they knew about a problem but failed to warn the public. (Buford, 6/19)

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The Associated Press: Georgia High Court: State Can't Be Sued Without Its Consent
A challenge to a Georgia law banning most abortions after 20 weeks has led the state's highest court to reaffirm that the state can't be sued without its consent. But the court also said Monday that state officials can be sued as individuals to prevent them from enforcing laws alleged to violate the state Constitution. The ruling came as the Georgia Supreme Court rejected the challenge to a 2012 law that bans doctors from performing abortions five months after an egg is fertilized, except when a fetus has a defect so severe it is unlikely to live. (6/19)

KCUR: New Problems, Same Result: Federal Payments Still Halted For Osawatomie State Hospital

Safety concerns continue to prevent recertification of Osawatomie State Hospital, although a recent inspection didn't find any evidence of the patient violence that prompted federal officials to decertify it in late 2015. Staffing shortages and concerns about security and patient safety prompted the initial order. Certain they had addressed those issues, state officials appeared confident the state-run psychiatric hospital would pass muster. But when inspectors visited the facility in May, they discovered new problems with sanitation, infection control and fire safety. (Wingerter, 6/19)

Boston Globe: Families Sue Health Insurers To Cover Wilderness Therapy For Mental Illness

Now, a growing number of families are challenging insurance companies that refuse to cover wilderness therapy, including a Massachusetts family that sued Harvard Pilgrim Health Care in May for refusing to pay for their son's therapy at RedCliff Ascent, an outdoor behavioral therapy program in Utah... Lawsuits have been filed in Florida, Kentucky, New York, and Utah, bolstered by federal rules expanding mental health care

coverage, and by improvements in the wilderness therapy industry itself, which had been heavily criticized following a series of deaths a decade ago. (Kowalczyk, 6/19)

Chicago Tribune: University Of Chicago Medicine Will Remain In UnitedHealthcare's Network

University of Chicago Medicine and insurer UnitedHealthcare have reached a contract agreement that will keep the academic medical system and its doctors in the insurer's network. The agreement will spare about 8,000 patients from having to either switch doctors or pay significantly more for care. The new contract agreement comes shortly after patients received letters saying that University of Chicago Medicine and University of Chicago Physicians Group could be out of UnitedHealthcare's network starting June 30. (Schencker, 6/19)

The CT Mirror: Charter Oak Health Center Reaches Agreement Over Whistle-Blower Firings

The U.S. Labor Department has determined the firing of three Charter Oak Health Center employees, who blew the whistle on the facilities' failure to adequately respond to a tuberculosis exposure, was unlawful. Under a consent order, Charter Oak agreed to pay the three fired employees back pay and "take other corrective action," the Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration said Monday. (Radelat, 6/19)

Kaiser Health News: Despite A Growing Appetite, Buffet-Style Flat-Fee Clinics Shutter In Seattle

In recent years, a small but growing number of practices embraced a buffet approach to primary care, offering patients unlimited services for a modest flat fee instead of billing them a la carte for every office visit and test. But after a pioneering practice shut its doors earlier this month, some question whether "direct primary care," as it's called, can succeed. Many doctors and patients say they like the arrangement. Direct primary care practices typically don't accept insurance, which frees physicians from treatment preapprovals and claims paperwork. (Andrews, 6/20)

Pioneer Press: Lakeview Hospital Reveals Future Stillwater Location

A concept plan for a future Lakeview Hospital campus at the northeast corner of Minnesota 36 and Manning Avenue in Stillwater shows a 96-bed, three-story hospital overlooking a pond. Lakeview officials unveiled the plan — which also includes an ambulatory (same-day) surgery center, senior housing and a medical-office building — earlier this month at a workshop with the Stillwater City Council. The plan sites the hospital to the north of the 68-acre plot, with parking closer to Minnesota 36. In

addition, an extension of Curve Crest Boulevard runs through the site and intersects with Manning. (Divine, 6/19)

San Jose Mercury News: Affordable Housing For Vets, Artists, Homeless
The City Council this week moved forward with three affordable housing projects and a fourth one — slated for East San Jose — is on the way. And in the next couple of weeks, elected leaders will consider allowing churches to house homeless people permanently, and will discuss where to place up to 200 “tiny homes,” micro housing units with a bed and locking door and shared bathrooms and showers. (Giwargis, 6/19)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

16. Thoughts On Senate Health Plan Secrecy; Realizing 'Real' Medicaid Reform

Editorial writers examine a range of topics related to health system reform.

The Washington Post: Senate Leaders Plan To Rush A Health-Care Bill To A Vote, And There's Nothing Democrats Can Do About It
When the Republican-led Senate Rules Committee briefly flirted with the idea of restricting television interviews in the hallways of the Capitol last week, it became only the most obvious manifestation of how the party's leaders were handling the development of a bill to overhaul Obamacare: out of the public eye. While that effort was quickly sidelined after some outcry, the Republican leadership in the Senate was otherwise unfazed in its push to craft a bill that would expose its members to as little negative public attention as possible. No repeat of the town hall meetings that drew angry constituents who yelled at House Republicans and, they clearly hope, no weeks and weeks of swamped office phone lines. (Philip Bump, 6/19)

Los Angeles Times: In Secret Obamacare Repeal Bill, Senate Republicans Plan Even Harsher Cuts To Medicaid Than House GOP
In the all-out quest for ways to strip health coverage from millions of people in order to deliver a huge tax cut to the richest Americans, Senate Republicans have been regarded as more moderate than their House colleagues. But a proposal leaked from the Senate GOP's closed-door drafting sessions on an Obamacare repeal bill may put that notion to rest: The Senate is contemplating a change in Medicaid that would cut it even more than the \$830-billion proposed by the House. That news comes from The Hill, which reported Monday that the Senate is contemplating imposing a lower inflation growth rate on Medicaid, which would be capped in both proposals. The Senate's idea is to allow Medicaid to grow at the rate of the overall consumer price index (specifically,

the CPI for all urban consumers, the most commonly used variant). (Michael Hiltzik, 6/19)

San Antonio Press-Express: Secrecy The Wrong Prescription For Health Care
After the House passed its repeal and replace effort — the American Health Care Act — without hearings, in secret and without a scoring by the Congressional Budget Office, the legislation moved to the Senate. But there, an all-male committee is crafting a version — you guessed it — without hearings, in secret and accepting no amendments from Democratic senators. (6/19)

WBUR: The Great American Health Care Heist

Last week, more than a dozen patient groups — including the March of Dimes and the American Lung Association — pleaded with McConnell to meet with them. McConnell's office refused... Unless we wake up and take to the streets, McConnell and his colleagues will do what cynical career politicians have been doing for decades: subvert the will of people in broad daylight and send millions of American families into despair and bankruptcy. (Steve Almond, 6/20)

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Forbes: Is Real Medicaid Reform Possible? Two States--Indiana And Rhode Island-- Show That It Is

Two states, Rhode Island and Indiana, have been able to make major changes to the traditional Medicaid programs, which allowed them to curb costs and enhance their recipients' quality of care. Patient satisfaction went up sharply. (Steve Forbes, 6/20)

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RealClear Health: AHCA's Medicaid Reform Empowers Governors

Much of the public discussion about health care and health insurance reform abounds with misinformation. Medicaid, in particular, has become a political tool, with daily posts and articles about reforms to the program that distort the record for political gain. But there is little mention of the need to empower governors to take ownership of the program. (Francis Rooney, 6/20)

Louisville Courier-Journal: Senate's Health Reform Must Prioritize Addiction Treatment
Kentucky is in the midst of a catastrophic opioid crisis. We see the damage that heroin and other drugs have inflicted on communities across the state. According to a new poll, one in four adults in Kentucky know someone who has misused prescription pain medication and nearly one in five know someone using heroin. In 2015, 1,273 died from

a drug overdose, the third highest death rate in the nation. (Mike Barry and Paul Samuels, 6/19)

The Washington Post: How States Like Kansas Punish The Poor For Being Both Too Poor And Not Poor Enough

Obamacare was designed to make it easier for poor Americans to buy insurance. In many states, though, the law has left a hole where less needy households can receive benefits, while millions of Americans living in poverty cannot. They are, in effect, too poor to get help. It is one of several utterly maddening paradoxes in President Barack Obama's health-care overhaul, more formally known as the Affordable Care Act — which, due to GOP opposition, political gridlock and the Supreme Court, has never been fully enacted in the way Democrats intended. (Max Ehrenfreund, 6/19)

The Des Moines Register: On Health Care, Grassley Can Be A Maverick

Early in his political career, Sen. Chuck Grassley was considered by many to be a "maverick." He earned a reputation as an independent thinker who worked across party lines and focused on solving problems. Unfortunately, that Grassley essentially disappeared during the Obama presidency. Rather than a voice of reason, Iowa's senator joined a chorus of obstructionist Republicans intent on opposing anything proposed by the president. (6/19)

The Columbus Dispatch: Single-Payer System Has Its Faults

Obamacare looks shaky, mostly because Republicans are sabotaging it. This, in turn, has rekindled calls on the left to create a European-style "single-payer" system, in which the government directly pays for every American's health care. California lawmakers, for example, are considering such a plan for their state. (6/20)

17. Viewpoints: The Impact Of Artificial Intelligence On Health Care; Chronic Disease Rates 'A Wake-Up Call' For Policymakers

A selection of opinions on health care from around the country.

Fortune: Where Artificial Intelligence Will Pay Off Most In Health Care

Of all the places where artificial intelligence is gaining a foothold, nowhere is the impact likely to be as great — at least in the near term — as in healthcare. A new report from Accenture Consulting, entitled Artificial Intelligence: Healthcare's New Nervous System, projects the market for health-related AI to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 40% through 2021—to \$6.6 billion, from around \$600 million in 2014. (Clifton Leaf, 6/19)

RealClear Health: Rising Chronic Disease Rates Portend Unsustainable Costs
12 percent of Americans suffer from five or more chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes. This fraction of the population accounts for 41 percent of total health care spending. That ought to serve as a wake-up call for policymakers. If we don't do more to prevent people from acquiring chronic disease, the resulting health care bills could blow a gaping hole in the federal budget. (Kenneth Thorpe, 6/20)

RealClear Health: Even Though Genetic Information Is Available, Doctors May Be Ignoring Important Clinical Clues
With the availability of home genetic testing kits from companies such as “23andMe” and “Ancestry DNA,” more people will be getting information about their genetic lineage and what races and ethnicities of the world are included in their DNA. ... But there's a problem, a recent study from the National Institutes of Health found. Many physicians and other providers are uncomfortable discussing race with their patients, and also reticent to connect race or ethnicity to genetics and clinical decision-making, the study suggested. (Greg Hall, 6/19)

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Los Angeles Times: Trump's Answer To The Obesity Epidemic: Here, Have A Cookie
The most attention-getting news out of the food industry last week was Amazon's announcement Friday that it's buying Whole Foods for nearly \$14 billion. But that wasn't the most important news. The most important news was a largely overlooked announcement from the Trump administration that it's bowing to the wishes of food companies — and ignoring the pleas of scientific and medical experts — by giving industry players more time to push sugary treats on an increasingly blubbery nation. (David Lazarus, 6/20)

Forbes: If You Need Long-Term Care, It Matters Where You Live
If you or a loved one needs long-term care, where you live matters ... a lot. A new report by AARP shows wide variation in the quality of supports and services among states—whether delivered at home or in a nursing facility. While it found important improvements across states, it also identified significant shortcomings, even in the highest-rated states. (Howard Gleckman, 6/16)

The Washington Post: Law Makes VA Treat Some Family Caregivers Better Than Others
The last time Dennis Joyner walked, he was on patrol in Vietnam's Mekong Delta on June 26, 1969. That's when he tripped a 105-pound booby trap bomb. He lost both legs

above the knees and his left arm below the elbow. "I have been confined to a one arm drive wheelchair for 48 years," said the 68-year-old Longwood, Fla., resident. "As a former high school athlete, my life changed drastically in how I have to live with the combat injuries I suffered in Vietnam." He gets lots of help from his wife Donna, "my day-to-day caregiver." (Joe Davidson, 6/19)

Stat: Bedside Drug Production Will Truly Enable Personalized Medicine

Making medicines tailored to the needs and characteristics of individual patients is the dream for many scientists. This kind of personalized medicine approach would provide treatment with the highest possible effectiveness and safety, and would also save money. But it requires rethinking how we make medications. (Huub Schellekens, 6/19)

St. Louis Post-Dispatch: Roe V. Wade Saves Lives

An abortion is a terrible thing. No woman wants to have an abortion. Nevertheless, sometimes abortion can be the necessary choice of two excruciatingly painful options. Before 1973 when the Supreme Court legitimized abortion in the landmark Roe v. Wade decision, the procedure was illegal in most states; desperate women without means had to undergo illegal operations to end an untenable pregnancy. As a result, many were rendered sterile and some died. (Dr. Richard Gulick and Carol Shepley, 6/20)

The Kansas City Star: Is The Ghost Of Anti-Abortion Crusader Phill Kline Going To Haunt Missouri?

Are you ready for the return of Phill Kline? That's exactly what Missouri could get should the House this week pass a sweeping abortion measure that would, among other things, require annual health inspections of clinics. The bill is the focus of the year's second special session called by Gov. Eric Greitens. This unnecessary bill does something else, too: The measure carves out a special exception for this one issue when it comes to law enforcement. The legislation gives the attorney general, now Josh Hawley, an ardent abortion opponent who is said to have higher political aspirations, the power to prosecute violations of abortion laws. He could step in whenever local prosecutors opt not to act. (6/19)

The New York Times: Where Are The Rape-Kit Nurses?

If you are an adult victim of sexual assault in Las Vegas, there is only one hospital where you can go to have a rape kit completed. Only two nurses in that hospital have specialized training to do the exam. In a metropolitan area of two million people, in a state with consistently high rates of domestic violence, the limited number of resources for sexual assault survivors seeking to prosecute, although troubling, is not unique. (Brittany Bronson, 6/20)

The Health Care Blog: Trump's Brain: What's Going On?

In late May the science and health news site STAT ran a provocative article titled: "Trump wasn't always so linguistically challenged. What could explain the change?" Not surprisingly, the piece went viral. After all, aren't most of us wondering whether something is up with the President's—how shall I say it—state of mind, psychological status, character, personality, and yes, mental health? (Steven Findlay, 6/19)

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KHN Morning Briefing

KAISER HEALTH NEWS = A

= A **Wednesday, June 28, 2017**

Check Kaiser Health News online for the latest headlines

NOTE TO READERS

DON'T MISS IT! KHN will hold a Facebook Live chat today at 2 pm. Senior correspondent Jordan Rau will answer questions about his story examining how House and Senate Republican plans to overhaul the ACA and Medicaid would impact nursing home care. Tune in here.

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From Kaiser Health News:

KAISER HEALTH NEWS ORIGINAL STORIES

1. Analysis: Mitch McConnell Plans To Hide Trumpcare's Pain Until After Midterms

The Senate health bill to repeal Obamacare hews closely to the electoral calendar, delaying much of the pain until after Republicans face re-election in Congress, statehouses and the White House. (Michael McAuliff, 6/27)

2. For Millennials, Both Good And Bad News In Senate's GOP Health Bill

Provisions in the Senate's "repeal and replace" bill could help some young adults by lowering the cost of premiums but could hurt others who gained insurance through a massive expansion to Medicaid. (Anna Gorman and Kellen Browning, 6/28)

3. Postcard From Capitol Hill: Doubts, Dissent Over Health Care Bill Rescue July 4 Holiday

Scenes from Capitol Hill Tuesday as Sen. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's effort to pass a health care bill this week crumbled. (Rachel Bluth, 6/27)

4. Hospitals Ramp Up Hyperbaric Therapy For Diabetics, Despite Concerns

Medicare is trying to deter overuse of hyperbaric therapy, and some experts question its effectiveness for healing diabetic wounds, one of the treatment's fastest-growing uses. (Phil Galewitz, 6/28)

5. Political Cartoon: 'Push Over?'

Kaiser Health News provides a fresh take on health policy developments with "Political Cartoon: 'Push Over?'" by Jeff Danziger.

Here's today's health policy haiku:

IS THERE ANOTHER ANSWER?

CBO death blow:
GOP plan strands millions
Medicare for all?

- Daniel Kuhn

If you have a health policy haiku to share, please [Contact Us](#) and let us know if you want us to include your name. Keep in mind that we give extra points if you link back to a KHN original story.

Summaries Of The News:

HEALTH LAW

6. In Face Of Mounting Dissension, McConnell Blinks And Delays Health Bill Vote Until After Recess

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) says the bill is not dead, but even more lawmakers came out against the proposal after the vote was pushed.

The New York Times: [Vote Delayed As G.O.P. Struggles To Marshal Support For Health Care Bill](#)

Facing intransigent Republican opposition, the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, on Tuesday delayed a vote on legislation to repeal the Affordable Care Act, dealing another setback to Republicans' seven-year effort to dismantle the health law and setting up a long, heated summer of health care battles. (Kaplan and Pear, 6/27)

The Associated Press: GOP 'Obamacare' Repeal Teeters After Senate Shelves Vote
The surprise development leaves the legislation's fate uncertain while raising new doubts about whether President Donald Trump will ever make good on his many promises to erase his predecessor's signature legislative achievement. (6/28)

The Hill: Senate GOP Delays ObamaCare Repeal Vote Past Recess
The GOP leader put on a brave face after an emergency meeting at the White House with President Trump and his conference, telling reporters that his members just needed a little bit more time. (Roubein, Sullivan and Hellmann, 6/27)

Politico: Senate GOP Yanks Obamacare Repeal Bill
"Legislation of this complexity almost always takes longer than anyone would hope," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told reporters. "But we're pressing on." McConnell said he opted to delay a planned vote on the Senate bill after several members asked for more time to review the sweeping legislation. (Haberkorn and Everett, 6/27)

CQ Roll Call: GOP Leaders Cancel Health Care Vote This Week
Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, the chamber's No. 2 Republican, said Tuesday afternoon that his GOP colleagues needed "a little more time" to work on their health care legislation. "It's a conversation and we haven't finished having our conversation," said Cornyn. (McIntire and Lesniewski, 6/27)

The Wall Street Journal: Intraparty Disputes Stall Republicans' Legislative Agenda
"It's almost like we're serving in the minority right now. We just simply don't know how to govern," said Rep. Steve Womack (R., Ark.). "How we've been given this opportunity to govern and we are finding every reason in the world not to is absolutely incredible to me." (Peterson and Rubin, 6/27)

The Philadelphia Inquirer/Philly.com: Lacking Support, Republicans Postpone Vote On Health-Care Bill
Looming in the recent memory was the House push to repeal the law. When plans for a vote on it collapsed in March, Speaker Paul Ryan conceded that Obamacare would remain in force. Weeks later, with some more wrangling and a deal with conservatives

brokered by Rep. Tom MacArthur of New Jersey, the House narrowly approved a modified proposal. (Tamari, 6/27)

The Washington Post: More Republicans Announce Opposition To Health-Care Bill ³
Only After Vote Is Delayed

Three more Republican senators announced opposition to the Senate's health-care bill on Tuesday — but only after Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) announced he will delay a vote to begin debating the legislation. (O'Keefe, 6/27)

The Hill: Three More GOP Senators Announce Opposition To Healthcare Bill
Republican Sens. Jerry Moran (Kan.), Shelley Moore Capito (W.Va.) and Rob Portman (Ohio) announced Tuesday afternoon that they will vote against the Senate GOP bill to repeal and replace ObamaCare in its current form. Moran said in a statement on Twitter that the bill "missed the mark," adding that he was "pleased" that the vote on the Senate bill was delayed by Republican leadership until after the July 4 recess. (Bowden, 6/27)

Cleveland Plain Dealer: Sen. Rob Portman Says He Opposes GOP Healthcare Bill --
After Bill Was Yanked

Sometime before 2 p.m. Tuesday, Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell yanked the Obamacare-repeal-and-reform bill from consideration, saying he wanted more time to work on it. It was obvious by then the bill couldn't pass. About two hours later -- after McConnell's announcement -- Sen. Rob Portman, an Ohio Republican who was on the fence, announced he was opposed to the bill and could not vote for it. (Koff, 6/27)

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Columbus Dispatch: Senate Delays Health-Care Vote; Portman Opposes Obamacare Replacement For Now

[Portman] said the Senate draft "falls short and therefore I cannot support it in its current form." "In the days and weeks ahead, I'm committed to continue talking with my colleagues about how we can fix the serious problems in our health-care system while protecting Ohio's most vulnerable citizens." (Torry and Wehrman, 6/28)

San Francisco Chronicle: Opposition In GOP Ranks Forces Delay In Vote On
Obamacare Overhaul

Another moderate Republican, Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, welcomed the possibility that the legislation, opposed by the Senate's 46 Democrats, could eventually be abandoned to open the way for a bipartisan effort to fix the Affordable Care Act, President Barack Obama's signature 2010 health legislation. (Lochhead, 6/27)

Kansas City Star: Jerry Moran Says Health Care Bill 'Missed The Mark For Kansans' After Senate Vote Delayed

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran came out against a Republican health care bill Tuesday shortly after Senate GOP leaders announced plans to delay a vote until after July 4. Moran, a Kansas Republican, has emerged as a key vote in the fight over a Republican plan to repeal the Affordable Care Act, more commonly known as Obamacare, that would result in 22 million people losing insurance by 2026, according to an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office. (Lowry, 6/27)

Texas Tribune: Senate Republicans Halt Health Care Overhaul As Cruz Maintains Opposition

After days of arm-twisting, Senate Republican leaders on Tuesday essentially conceded that they had not secured the votes to move forward on a massive overhaul of the American health care system and would pick up the issue again in July. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky emerged with the updated plans from a lunch with other GOP senators, along with the news that the chamber's Republicans were headed to the White House for a meeting with President Donald Trump. (Livingston, 6/27)

The Associated Press: Wisconsin Senator's Health Care Stance Welcomed Back Home

Conservatives and liberals in Wisconsin both see hope in Republican Sen. Ron Johnson's steadfast refusal to back the current version of the GOP Senate health care bill. Although they disagree with the reasons for his opposition, liberals see Johnson's stand as a chance to sink the entire Republican effort to kill the existing health care law enacted under former President Barack Obama. (6/27)

The Hill: McConnell: ObamaCare Repeal Isn't Dead

Democrats quickly claimed victory on the discussion, but urged supporters to keep up pressure on a handful of undecided GOP senators over the upcoming recess. (Carney, 6/27)

The Hill: Ryan Defends CBO Director Amid Backlash On Senate Healthcare Bill Score
Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) defended the head of the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) on Tuesday, just a day after the White House lashed out at the CBO's estimate that the Senate GOP healthcare bill would leave 22 million more people uninsured during the next decade. Ryan expressed confidence in the integrity and impartiality of CBO Director Keith Hall, noting that then-Budget Committee Chairman Tom Price (R-Ga.) — President Trump's current Health and Human Services secretary — was among the GOP leaders who hired Hall in 2015. (Wong, 6/27)

7. What's The Path Forward For The Senate Health Care Bill?

From the Congressional Budget Office score, Republican leaders got \$200 billion in the bank to woo reluctant lawmakers, but does the measure actually stand a chance of passing?

The Wall Street Journal: Short On Backers, GOP Delays Vote On Health Bill

In a test of his leadership, Mr. McConnell now will need to bridge a divide between conservative Republicans, who say the bill retains too many of the ACA's regulations to significantly lower premiums, and GOP centrists, who worry the legislation goes too far in cutting funding to Medicaid. (Armour and Peterson, 6/27)

Los Angeles Times: Crunch Time For McConnell As Senate GOP Is Forced To Delay Vote On Healthcare Bill

The seasoned GOP leader will be aided by what amounts to a \$200-billion piggy bank to push Republicans holdouts over the line. That's the bill's extra savings compared with the House version that McConnell can tap to provide perks to individual senators, from more opioid assistance to expanded tax-free health savings accounts. A similar strategy — delay and enticements — worked well in the House, where Republicans last month passed their healthcare bill on the third try. (Mascaro, 6/27)

The Washington Post: Trump, Senate Leaders Attempt To Regroup After Postponing Vote To Overhaul Obamacare

Just how realistic a vote is after July 4 remains unclear. At least one senator who had publicly opposed the procedural vote McConnell had hoped to take Tuesday — Dean Heller (Nev.) — indicated that he was willing to reconsider his initial opposition, if the bill was going to be reworked. At the White House, Heller playfully but pointedly complained about a Trump-allied super PAC that was airing ads against him in Nevada. By Tuesday night, the group had decided to pull the ads, and Heller had signaled to McConnell that he would continue to engage — far from a “yes” vote, but open to discussing his concerns. (Sullivan, Snell and Eilperin, 6/27)

Bloomberg: McConnell Scrambles To Win GOP Votes For Troubled Health Measure

GOP leaders seemed surprised by the extent of the objections from within their party. At least five Republicans made clear ahead of time that they weren't ready to advance the measure this week. and another three Republicans announced their opposition after McConnell delayed the vote. (Litvan, 6/28)

Boston Globe: Why Susan Collins Won't Vote Yes On Healthcare Even After The Delay
Republican Senator Susan Collins of Maine announced Monday night that she would vote against a procedural motion on the Senate health care repeal bill and said that

unless the bill changed significantly she would vote against the bill itself. Majority leader Mitch McConnell should not even try to negotiate with Collins. (Pindell, 6/27)

Atlanta Journal-Constitution: With Senate Health Care Bill In Jeopardy, Perdue, Isakson To Huddle With Trump

Georgia's two U.S. senators were planning to join many of their GOP colleagues at the White House Tuesday afternoon after Senate leaders abruptly hit the breaks on a health care overhaul they had been planning to bring to a vote later this week. Republicans David Perdue and Johnny Isakson both voiced support for their party leaders' decision to take the July 4th recess to rework their Obamacare replacement legislation after it became clear there were not enough votes as written. (Hallerman, 6/27)

Politico: 5 Changes McConnell Can Make To Get Repeal Bill On Track

Mitch McConnell has little margin for error as he tries to salvage the Senate's Obamacare repeal effort over the July 4 break. (Cancryn, 6/27)

The Wall Street Journal: Senate Republican Health Bill: What's Next After Delay? Here's what to expect as the debate on health care moves forward. (Jamerson, 6/27)

USA Today: Obamacare's Architects Emanuel And Sebelius Outline How It Could Be Fixed

As Senate Republicans struggle to find the votes to repeal the Affordable Care Act, the architects of Obamacare have an idea to try if they fail. Just fix it. (Page, 6/27)

8. Mitch's Miscalculation: Where One Of Senate's Most Skilled Strategists Went Wrong

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has long been touted as one of the Senate's best tacticians. So what happened?

The New York Times: McConnell's Reputation As A Master Tactician Takes A Hit
Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader, has long enjoyed a reputation as a master tactician. But when it comes to repealing the Affordable Care Act, he seems to have miscalculated in the first round of play. He assumed that his conservative and moderate colleagues would come together to make good on their seven-year promise to repeal the health care law, and quickly. (Steinhauer, 6/27)

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Politico: Inside The GOP's Surprise Health Care Flop

Senate Republicans had no inkling of what they were walking into on Tuesday afternoon as they filed into the Mike Mansfield room on the Capitol's second floor. Mitch McConnell's 51 colleagues, from his most junior members to his closest lieutenants, fully expected the Senate to vote this week on the Senate GOP's wounded Obamacare repeal bill. They knew the whip count was far worse than advertised but were ready for McConnell to either admit defeat or start a furious round of deal-making to try to win their support. They took McConnell at his word that a vote would occur, regardless of the result. (Everett, Haberkorn and Dawsey, 6/27)

The Washington Post: 'Repeal And Replace' Was Once A Unifier For The GOP. Now It's An Albatross.

For Republicans, Obamacare was always the great unifier. In a fractious party, everyone agreed that the Affordable Care Act was the wrong solution to what ailed the nation's health-care system, with too much government and too little freedom for consumers. Replacing Obamacare has become the party's albatross, a sprawling objective still in search of a solution. The effort to make good on a seven-year promise has cost the Trump administration precious months of its first year in office, with tax restructuring backed up somewhere in the legislative pipeline, infrastructure idling somewhere no one can see it and budget deadlines looming. (Balz, 6/27)

The Hill: Behind Closed Doors, Tensions In The GOP

The White House and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) are using a soft sell on Republicans as they try to save legislation repealing and replacing ObamaCare. McConnell told colleagues at a closed-door meeting on Tuesday that they would not vote on the healthcare bill this week, as GOP leaders had been promising for weeks. (Bolton, 6/27)

Kaiser Health News: Analysis: Mitch McConnell Plans To Hide Trumpcare's Pain Until After Midterms

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is well aware of the political peril of taking health benefits away from millions of voters. He also knows the danger of reneging on the pledge that helped make him the majority leader: to repeal Obamacare. Caught between those competing realities, McConnell's bill offers a solution: go ahead and repeal Obamacare, but hide the pain for as long as possible. Some of the messaging on the bill seems nonsensical (see: the contention that \$772 billion squeezed out of Medicaid isn't a cut). But McConnell's timetable makes perfect sense — if you are looking at the electoral calendar. (McAuliff, 6/27)

Kaiser Health News: Postcard From Capitol Hill: Doubts, Dissent Over Health Care Bill Rescue July 4 Holiday

When Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell broke the news Tuesday afternoon, all the nervous buildup around the Senate health care bill vanished faster than a sticky, summer day in Washington, D.C., after a thunderstorm. Could McConnell really push the bill through the Senate before senators left town for the holiday? How many senators were balking now? Those and other questions disappeared — for now — when McConnell announced the Better Care Reconciliation Act would get no floor vote until after July 4. (Bluth, 6/27)

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9. Trump's Negotiator-In-Chief Efforts Haven't Been Exactly Welcomed In Senate Push

President Donald Trump cajoled and arm-twisted House members into shouldering through a bill, but he's been mostly sidelined during the Senate negotiations. Meanwhile, Trump said it was "OK" if the upper chamber doesn't manage to pass a bill.

The New York Times: On Senate Health Bill, Trump Falters In The Closer? 9s Role President Trump began his all-hands meeting with Republican senators at the White House on Tuesday by saying they were "very close" to passing a health care bill, just as efforts to fast-track a vote this week collapsed. If Republicans do manage to broker a deal — as Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader, pledged to do during a lively East Room back-and-forth with the president ? 4 it is not likely to be because of Mr. Trump's involvement. Until Tuesday afternoon, the president was largely on the sidelines as the fate of one of his most important campaign pledges played out. (Thrush and Martin, 6/27)

The Washington Post: Who's Afraid Of Trump? Not Enough Republicans — At Least For Now.

Scrambling to line up support for the Republican health-care bill, President Trump got on the phone Monday with Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) and urged him to back the measure. The president's personal plea was not enough. On Tuesday, Lee said he would vote against the bill. Senate GOP leaders later postponed the planned health-care vote because too many other Republican senators also opposed — for now, at least — legislation that would deliver on Trump's campaign promise to scale back the law known as Obamacare. (Rucker, Costa and Parker, 6/27)

The Associated Press: Trump On Healthcare Bill: 'If We Don't Get It Done ... That's OK' President Trump said that if the healthcare bill fails to pass in the Senate, he won't like

it — but "that's OK." Trump spoke Tuesday at a gathering of Senate Republicans after their leaders delayed a vote on their healthcare bill until at least next month. Trump said, "This will be great if we get it done and if we don't get it done it's going to be something that we're not going to like and that's OK and I can understand that." (6/27)

Politico: Trump: Obamacare Repeal Bill 'Will Be Great, If We Get It Done'
"But I think we have a chance to do something very, very important for the public, very, very important for the people of our country that we love," he added, before asking reporters to leave the meeting. (Conway, 6/27)

The Hill: Trump: Senate GOP 'Very Close' To Agreement On Health Bill
President Trump said Tuesday afternoon that Senate Republicans are getting "very close" to passing their embattled plan to repeal and replace ObamaCare, but added that if it fails, "that's OK." "I think the Senate bill is going to be great," Trump said during a photo-op ahead of a meeting with nearly every Republican senator at the White House. "So we're going to talk and we're going to see what we can do. But we're getting very close." (Fabian, 6/27)

Roll Call: Rand Paul Says Trump Open To His Health Care Ideas
Sen. Rand Paul came away from a meeting on Tuesday with President Donald Trump thinking that the administration would be willing to move the health care reconciliation package in his direction. Paul has called for more of a straight repeal of the 2010 health care law, rather than the partial repeal and replace represented by the measure crafted by Senate GOP leaders. He was not so sure how open Senate GOP leaders would be to his changes to the proposal to roll back the 2010 health care law, however. (Lesniewski, 6/27)

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10. Governors From Both Parties Rise Up To Become Blockade Against Senate Health Plan

State leaders from both parties were alarmed at the potential for harm to their constituents, state budgets and insurance markets.

The New York Times: How Governors From Both Parties Plotted To Derail The Senate Health Bill

A once-quiet effort by governors to block the full repeal of the Affordable Care Act reached its climax in Washington on Tuesday, as state executives from both parties — who have conspired privately for months — mounted an all-out attack on the Senate's

embattled health care legislation hours before Republicans postponed a vote. At the center of the effort has been a pair of low-key moderates: Gov. John R. Kasich, Republican of Ohio, and Gov. John W. Hickenlooper, Democrat of Colorado, who on Tuesday morning called on the Senate to reject the Republican bill and to negotiate a bipartisan alternative. (Burns, 6/27)

The Hill: GOP Governors Could Help Bring Down Senate Health Bill

GOP governors opposed to the Senate healthcare bill's changes to Medicaid are exerting influence on their home-state senators, making it more difficult for Republican leaders to net the 50 votes they need to pass the legislation. The GOP governors could give cover to senators who oppose the bill, but they could also make it more difficult for a Republican senator to stake out a dissenting position. (Weixel, 6/28)

Los Angeles Times: Gov. Jerry Brown Says GOP Healthcare Bill Cuts 'Right Into The Heart Of What Is Already A Divided Nation'

One in three California residents are covered by Medicaid, and California is thought to have the most to lose if Republicans gather enough votes to roll back major aspects of the Affordable Care Act. California would see the nation's biggest increase in uninsured people by next year and face a \$24-billion budget shortfall by 2026 because of reduced Medicaid funding, California's Democratic senators and Gov. Jerry Brown warned during a call with reporters on Tuesday. (Wire, 6/27)

The CT Mirror: Malloy: Senate Bill Would Cost CT Billions, End Health Care For Thousands

The U.S. Senate's health care bill would result in "devastating" Medicaid cuts to Connecticut, reaching \$2.9 billion per year by 2026 and stripping tens of thousands of state residents of health care, Gov. Dannel Malloy said Tuesday. The Republican Senate plan, known as the Better Care Reconciliation Act, would shift the responsibility for providing a health care system to the 50 states, while reducing the amount of federal Medicaid money for those states. (Radelat, 6/27)

Cleveland Plain Dealer: Gov. John Kasich Calls Senate Healthcare Bill 'Unacceptable,' Says He's Told That To Sen. Rob Portman Repeatedly

Ohio Gov. John Kasich doesn't get to vote in Congress. But while in Washington for a meeting, he reminded Congress during a news conference that the Senate healthcare bill "is unacceptable to me." (Koff, 6/27)

Roll Call: Kasich On Health Care Bill: 'Not Acceptable'

[Ohio Gov. John] Kasich did want to talk about the steep cuts to Medicaid contained in the bill Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and a pursed-lipped cadre of Republican colleagues made public last week, and how the cuts would decimate poor

and sick Ohioans. Kasich said the funding provided for Medicaid in the House health care overhaul bill passed in May was “really not adequate,” but that his state could “struggle through” with some flexibility. But he doesn’t feel that way about the Senate bill. “The amount of funding that they’re putting into Medicaid... is even less than what the House had,” Kasich said, “and what the House had was really not adequate.” (Connolly, 6/27)

Denver Post: John Hickenlooper Vows To Lobby Cory Gardner To Vote Against GOP Health Care Bill

It’s been a couple months since Democratic Gov. John Hickenlooper last spoke to Republican U.S. Sen. Cory Gardner about health care. But with Gardner still publicly undecided about a Senate health care bill, the Colorado governor vowed at a news conference Tuesday to personally reach out to the Colorado senator in an effort to get him to oppose the legislation. (Matthews, 6/27)

11. Republicans Say Preservation, Democrats Say Cut. The Fight Over Describing Medicaid's Future

Republicans object to calling the reductions in federal funding envisioned in their health plans a cut, but is it? News outlets examine the depth of the disagreement about Medicaid between the parties and its central role in the current debate.

The New York Times: Health Bill Does Not ‘Cut’ Medicaid Spending, Republicans Argue

Republicans, under fire for proposing health care legislation that would reduce Medicaid funding by hundreds of billions of dollars, have embraced an old argument that taking money from a program is not a “cut.” At first glance, the new pitch to make their strategy more palatable seems at odds with the numbers. The Congressional Budget Office said on Monday that the “Better Care Reconciliation Act” would reduce Medicaid spending by \$772 billion over a decade. By 2026, Medicaid enrollment would drop by 16 percent among people under the age of 65. So, are there cuts or not? (Rappeport, 6/27)

Modern Healthcare: Medicaid Remains Sticking Point In Senate ACA Repeal Bill
One of the sticking points among Republicans is how to rework the Medicaid program, which some states expanded under the Affordable Care Act. Lawmakers in those states are wary of rescinding the benefits to their constituents and facing a tougher road to re-election. Barrasso said covering childless adults gets away from Medicaid's

original purpose and that states need the flexibility to design their own programs. (Lee, 6/27)

Politico: Emboldened Industry Lobbyists Try To Scale Back Medicaid Cuts
Hospitals, doctors and nursing homes have one last chance to shape a Republican bill to repeal and replace Obamacare they say will hurt millions of old, poor and sick Americans — and their own bottom lines. After being on the sidelines for much of the repeal debate, the groups see an opening in the meltdown of the Senate health care bill. They're particularly worried about the legislation's proposed deep cuts to Medicaid, the country's largest insurance program, which covers 74 million people. (Cancryn and Demko, 6/27)

CNN: Senate GOP Health Bill Would Slash Medicaid. Here's How.
Republicans have wanted to repeal Obamacare for years -- but they've wanted to overhaul Medicaid for far longer. They are now getting their chance. The health care legislation working its way through Congress would do much more than its stated purpose of repealing and replacing Obamacare. It would make the most far-reaching changes and deepest cuts to Medicaid in the program's 52-year history. (Luhby, 6/26)

CQ Roll Call: Experts: Senate Bill's Mental Health Change Offers Little Help
A provision in the Senate Republican health care bill that would expand Medicaid coverage of mental health treatment services would be undermined by broader Medicaid changes, experts say. Currently, Medicaid cannot reimburse for inpatient mental health or substance use treatment in facilities with more than 16 beds. The Senate draft bill would give states the option to cover some inpatient services at larger psychiatric hospitals for up to 30 days in a month and 90 days in a calendar year. The federal government would pick up 50 percent of the costs. (Siddons, 6/27)

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Cleveland Plain Dealer: Medicaid Expansion Freeze Remains In Ohio Budget Ahead Of Final Votes

The Ohio House and Senate plan to vote Wednesday on a budget bill that would freeze Medicaid expansion enrollment next year, a move Gov. John Kasich's administration says would result in 500,000 low-income Ohioans losing health insurance coverage. More than 725,000 Ohioans have received coverage through Medicaid, the joint state-federal health insurance program for poor and disabled Americans, since the state expanded eligibility in 2014 to those making up to 138 percent of the poverty level. (Borchardt, 6/27)

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USA Today/Cincinnati Enquirer: Will John Kasich Veto Ohio GOP Plan To Hamstring Medicaid Expansion?

Ohio's GOP lawmakers have thrown down a challenge for Gov. John Kasich, who now must decide whether to veto their freeze of his Medicaid expansion — a freeze that could essentially kill the program for many lower-income adults. (Balmert, 6/28)

12. Under Senate Plan, Millionaires Would Get \$52,000 In Tax Cuts While Middle-Income Families Would Get \$260

Media outlets take a look at what's in the Senate legislation, including tweaks to the medical-loss-ratio and the chamber's substitution for the individual mandate, and offer takes on how Americans would be affected by the changes.

The Associated Press: GOP Health Bill: Big Tax Cuts For Rich, Not Much For Others
Millionaires would get tax cuts averaging \$52,000 a year from the Senate Republicans' health bill while middle-income families would get about \$260, according to a new analysis of the foundering bill. The analysis was done by the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center. It found that half of the tax cuts would go to families making more than \$500,000 a year. (Ohlemacher, 6/27)

The Wall Street Journal: As Health Bill Proceeds, Insurers Regret Loss Of Individual Mandate

Senate Republican leaders on Monday unveiled a new provision in their health bill designed to prod people to maintain their insurance coverage, a tweak made after insurers had complained an initial version of the legislation threatened to undermine the individual insurance market. But industry officials say it isn't clear how much the new clause would stabilize the markets or draw in the young, healthy enrollees insurers crave. (Wilde Mathews, 6/27)

The Wall Street Journal: Provision In Senate Health Bill Could Be A Boon To Insurers
Buried in the Senate Republican health bill is a possible boon for insurers: an end to the Affordable Care Act rule that forced them to spend the lion's share of premiums on health care for enrollees. Under the ACA, the federal government requires insurers to spend 80% of premiums revenue, received for individual and small-business plans, on health costs. For large employer plans, the share is 85%. If an insurer doesn't hit the required ratio, it has to rebate the extra money to customers. (Wilde Mathews, 6/28)

The New York Times: How Health Costs Would Soar For Older Americans Under The Senate Plan

In its analysis of the Republican health care bill, the Congressional Budget Office said something confusing: The bill would lower the price of the average health plan, but health insurance would still cost much more for many people, especially for older Americans. (Park and Sanger-Katz, 6/27)

The Washington Post: GOP Health-Care Bill Could Strip Public Schools Of Billions For Special Education

School superintendents across the country are raising alarms about the possibility that Republican health care legislation would curtail billions of dollars in annual funding they count on to help students with disabilities and poor children. (Brown, 6/28)

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Proposed GOP Healthcare Legislation May Jeopardize Schools

In Wisconsin, more than \$187 million is spent on school-based medical services annually, and Medicaid currently provides a little more than \$107 million, or 57% of the total cost, according to figures from Disability Rights Wisconsin. If the federal contribution is capped, and the state can't — or won't — pick up the additional portion, then the districts would have to pick up more of the costs. Wauwatosa's Ertl called that an unfunded mandate. (Oxenden, 6/27)

The New York Times: When Cutting Access To Health Care, There's A Price To Pay
Senators, the United States is a sick country. Four years ago, a panel of experts convened by the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council set out to assess the nation's health compared with that of 16 other rich nations. Americans, they found, had the second-highest mortality from noncommunicable conditions — like diabetes, heart disease or violence — and the fourth highest from infectious disease. In terms of infant and maternal mortality, Americans are the worst off. (Porter, 6/27)

Los Angeles Times: Senate GOP Healthcare Bill Would Be 'Devastating' For L.A. County, Officials Warn

Los Angeles County officials gathered Tuesday morning to warn of the impact the Senate healthcare bill could have on the county, which is home to one out of every 20 of the nation's Medicaid recipients. The Obamacare repeal bill unveiled last week would eliminate the mandate that all Americans have health insurance, alter the subsidies provided to people who buy insurance through the exchanges and undo several taxes on high-income Americans that are used to fund the Affordable Care Act. (Karlamañgla, 6/27)

NPR: The GOP Senate's Health Bill: Your Questions Answered

Since Senate Republicans released the draft of their bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act last week, many people have been wondering how the proposed

changes will affect their own coverage, and their family's: Will my pre-existing condition be covered? Will my premiums go up or down? (Kodjak, 6/27)

San Francisco Chronicle: GOP Health Bill Would Cut Majority Of Planned Parenthood Budget In California

Planned Parenthood of California, which operates more of the organization's health centers than any other state in the nation, would lose 73 percent of its operating budget under the health care bills that Republicans are pushing to replace the Affordable Care Act, its leaders said Tuesday. Planned Parenthood of Northern California, which operates 20 health centers San Francisco, Marin, Contra Costa and other counties between the Bay Area and the Oregon border, would face budget reductions of similar proportions. (Ho, 6/27)

Kaiser Health News: For Millennials, Both Good And Bad News In Senate's GOP Health Bill

Darlin Kpangbah receives free health insurance through Medicaid and is grateful for the coverage in case of accidents, such as when she tore a ligament in her leg a few years ago. "I feel like I'm injury-prone," said Kpangbah, 20, who lives in Sacramento, Calif. Without insurance, she said, the injury "would've been huge to pay for." Young adults like Kpangbah were among the biggest beneficiaries of Obamacare, which helped reduce the rates of uninsured millennials to record lows and provided millions of Americans with access to free or low-cost insurance as well as maternity care, mental health treatment and other services. (Gorman and Browning, 6/28)

13. 'Time To Crank Up The Outrage': Galvanized Protesters Plan On Going Hard Against Bill During Recess

"You are the wind under our wings," Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) said to cheering protesters. "You are the reason we've come this far."

The New York Times: Opponents Of Health Law Repeal Vow To Keep Pressure On Over Recess

Under a blistering sun, protesters let out a cheer on Tuesday across Capitol lawns as word spread that the Senate Republican leader had delayed a vote on repealing the Affordable Care Act. But amid the celebration, Democrats urged the crowds to keep the heat on lawmakers whose opposition to the health care overhaul could grow cold over the coming Fourth of July recess. (Chilkoti and Cochrane, 6/27)

The Washington Post: Democrats' 'Resistance' Calls For A July 4 Recess Push To Kill GOP's Bill

"We've got to fight even harder over the Fourth of July and every day until we bury this atrocious bill," said Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), chairman of the Democrats' 2018 Senate campaign efforts. "All of you: When your senators go back to their states, when they go to barbecues and parades, will you be there to tell them to kill this awful bill?" (Weigel, 6/27)

The Hill: Senate Democrats: ObamaCare Repeal Fight Isn't Over Yet
Senate Democrats are warning supporters that the fight to repeal and replace ObamaCare isn't over, even after Republicans delayed a vote on their bill until next month. "Over the next couple of weeks, we know that Leader [Mitch] McConnell will try to use a slush fund to buy off Republicans, cut back-room deals, to try and get this thing done," Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) told reporters on Tuesday. (Carney, 6/27)

NPR: Just 17 Percent Of Americans Approve Of Republican Senate Health Care Bill
Americans broadly disapprove of the Senate GOP's health care bill, and they're unhappy with how Republicans are handling the efforts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, according to a new NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist poll. Just 17 percent of those surveyed say they approve of the Senate's health care plan, the Better Care Reconciliation Act. (Taylor, 6/28)

KQED: Obamacare Inspires Unlikely Political Action In California's Rural, Republican Territory
Overall, the Affordable Care Act helped 25,000 people in far Northern California buy plans through the state marketplace, Covered California. But the law helped three times as many people, 75,000, enroll in Medi-Cal, the state's Medicaid program that provides free health coverage for low-income residents. (Dembosky, 6/28)

Houston Chronicle: Protesters Rally At Cruz's Houston Office As Vote On Health Care Bill Delayed Until After July 4
Nearly two dozen protesters gathered across the street from Ted Cruz's offices in downtown Houston Tuesday afternoon to pressure the junior senator from Texas on his coming vote on the Republican healthcare bill. Cruz is seen as one of a handful of GOP senators whose vote would be critical to the legislation's passage. The senator has said he is not prepared to vote on the bill and reportedly has been serving as a mediator to make the bill more palatable to conservatives. (Kadifa, 6/27)

14. Trump Group Pulls No-Holds-Barred Ads Attacking Heller For Opposition To Measure

America First Policies said it decided to take down its ads against Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.) because "he has decided to come back to the table to negotiate with his colleagues on the Senate bill."

Politico: Pro-Trump Group Pulls Ads Criticizing Heller Over Obamacare
America First Policies had begun airing TV and radio ads on Tuesday savaging Heller for his planned 'No' vote, with spots charging that Heller had broken his "promise" to voters that he would dismantle Obamacare ? 4 a stunning attack on a member of the president's own party and the most vulnerable Republican up for re-election in 2018. (Isenstadt, 6/27)

Roll Call: Pro-Trump Group Pulls Heller Ad After Backlash
Heller is arguably the most vulnerable GOP senator running for re-election in 2018, since he is the only Republican running in a state that Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton won in 2016.(Bowman, 6/27)

The Associated Press: Trump Group's Republican War Over Health Care Frustrates GOP
Three months ago, Republicans condemned political groups aligned with President Donald Trump for doing almost nothing to promote a health care bill. Now they think one of the groups may have gone too far. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell decided Tuesday to call off a planned vote this week on a proposal to repeal and replace former President Barack Obama's health care law. Some on the Hill blamed the unexpected delay on aggressive tactics by America First Policies, a politically active nonprofit run by a former White House aide and Trump campaign veterans. (Bykowicz, 6/28)

15. Traditionally Vocal Health Groups' Silence Over Plan Reflects Newly Splintered Industry

While the bill may represent an existential threat to some insurers, others see it as neutral. However other groups, such as hospitals, nursing homes and veterans' organizations, are definitely voicing their concerns over the proposed legislation.

The Washington Post: Why Some Major Health Groups Are Unusually Quiet About The Senate Bill
Major health care industry groups have well-oiled war machines that they have regularly deployed to bolster — or torpedo — proposed policy in the past. But with the Senate health bill threatening to reshape a sector that makes up one-sixth of the

American economy, many of the most powerful industry voices have been notably absent from the public debate. (Johnson, 6/27)

Bloomberg: Hospitals Attack GOP Health Bill In \$1 Million New Ad Campaign
Powerful hospital and medical school lobbying groups are spending at least \$1 million on television ads opposing Senate Republicans' plan to repeal and replace Obamacare. The ads ask viewers to consider whether they'll be among the millions of Americans projected to lose their health coverage under the Senate proposal, Rick Pollack, chief executive officer of the American Hospital Association, said Tuesday in a conference call with reporters. (Mattingly, 6/27)

The Associated Press: Major Veterans' Groups Voice Concern Over Senate Health Bill
Major veterans' organizations are voicing concerns about a Senate GOP bill to repeal the nation's health care law, fearing the impact of rising insurance costs and worried the underfunded Department of Veterans Affairs won't be able to fill the coverage gap. (Yen, 6/27)

The Wall Street Journal: Health-Care Bill Jangles Nursing-Home Nerves
Nursing-home executives are intensifying their opposition to the Senate's health-care overhaul, concerned that the proposed multibillion-dollar cuts to Medicaid would gravely wound the industry. Before Senate Republicans postponed a vote on the legislation Tuesday, a conference call organized by the American Health Care Association drew nearly 800 participants. They were asked to contact their senators and representatives to discuss the bill's potential impact, and to involve employees and family members of residents in the lobbying effort. (Simon, 6/27)

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: State Health Systems And Other Stakeholders Speak Out Against Health Care Bills
The bill passed by the House and the bill now before the Senate have prompted an array of organizations that try to work with Republicans and Democrats alike to take clear stands. ... The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated on Monday that the Senate bill would increase the number of people without health insurance by 22 million by 2026. (Boulton, 6/27)

Media outlets look at others' reactions to the Republicans' efforts as well —

CQ Roll Call: Chamber Of Commerce Pressures Senators To Support Health Bill
An influential supporter of Republican leaders' efforts to pass a health care and tax repeal package on Tuesday urged reluctant GOP senators to debate the controversial measure. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce announced it might include lawmakers' votes on a motion to proceed to the health bill in its annual scorecard on legislators'

performance. The lobbying push is part of a broad effort by the Trump administration and its allies to overcome Republicans' hesitation on voting on the bill. (Young, 6/27)

The Hill: Chamber Of Commerce Urges Repeal Of 'Cadillac Tax' On High-Cost Employer Health Plans

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce urged Senate Republicans to repeal ObamaCare's "Cadillac Tax" on high-cost employer insurance plans in its healthcare replacement bill. The tax isn't slated to go into effect until 2020, and the current Senate draft would further delay its implementation until 2026 to comply with the chamber's budget rules. (Hellmann, 6/27)

The Hill: Club For Growth Opposes Senate ObamaCare Repeal Bill

The Club for Growth announced its opposition on Tuesday to the Senate GOP's ObamaCare repeal-and-replace legislation, arguing it would make the United States' healthcare system worse. The conservative group said the Senate bill would actually "restore" ObamaCare by creating new mandates and imposing taxes. (Hellmann, 6/27)

KCUR: Sebelius: Republican Health Care Plans Are 'A Very Cruel War On The Poor'

In a post Tuesday on the Health Affairs blog, former Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius calls the Republican health care plans passed by the House and proposed by the Senate "a very cruel war on the poor." The post, co-authored with Ron Pollack, founding executive director of consumer health group Families USA, states, "By far, no demographic group would be hurt more by these legislative proposals than low-income people. They are the bulls-eye!" (Margolies, 6/28)

COVERAGE AND ACCESS

16. Sen. Warren Says 'Now It's Time For The Next Step. And The Next Step Is Single Payer.'

Although the Massachusetts Democrat once dismissed a call from progressives to move the country to a single-payer health system, she endorsed it in a new interview with The Wall Street Journal.

Roll Call: Warren: 'The Next Step Is Single-Payer'

Sen. Elizabeth Warren said Tuesday that opposing the Republican health care bill wasn't enough, and the Democratic Party should start running on a new national single-payer plan. "President Obama tried to move us forward with health-care coverage by using a conservative model that came from one of the conservative think tanks that had been advanced by a Republican governor in Massachusetts," she told the Wall Street

Journal. "Now it's time for the next step. And the next step is single payer." (Breiner, 6/27)

The Wall Street Journal: Elizabeth Warren Tries to Win Back Voters in Trump Country
Ms. Warren says her immediate focus is on fighting the Republican health-care legislation and mounting her 2018 re-election campaign. But she hasn't been shy about seeking to pull fellow Democrats and those running in next year's midterm elections to the left. Blocking the GOP rollback of provisions in the Affordable Care Act, Ms. Warren said, is not enough. She said Democrats on the ballot in the next two federal elections should back a national single-payer health-care plan. (Epstein, 6/27)

Boston Globe: How Elizabeth Warren Turned Into An Enthusiastic Supporter Of Single-Payer Health Care

Senator Elizabeth Warren now says Democrats should endorse a government-run, single-payer health insurance system for the upcoming 2018 midterm elections and beyond, after suggesting four years ago the proposal was "politically unacceptable." How did Warren's position evolve? (Herndon, 6/27)

PHARMACEUTICALS

17. Shares Of Biotech Firm At Center Of Congressional Ethics Uproar Plummet

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The controversy over the Australian company Innate Immunotherapeutics entangled now-Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price and Rep. Chris Collins.

Stat: House Republicans Backed This Biotech — And Lost Big

For years, Rep. Chris Collins has been an evangelist for Innate Immunotherapeutics, talking up the small Australian biotech company and enticing friends and congressional colleagues to buy its shares. They might now regret listening. Innate's lead drug, an investigational treatment for multiple sclerosis, failed in a 93-patient trial, demonstrating no benefit over placebo on an array of measures. And Innate's share price, propped up by the promise of its sole asset, promptly fell by more than 90 percent on Tuesday morning, to 4 cents a share. (Garde, 6/27)

Politico: Rep. Collins Loses \$17 Million In Biotech Stock

Collins' relationship with the company has raised eyebrows in recent months. And the Office of Congressional Ethics is currently investigating whether Collins engaged in insider trading. The longtime President Donald Trump supporter allegedly tipped off a

number of lawmakers and Buffalo-area leaders to invest in the company, which sold Collins' political acquaintances discounted shares that soared after their investments. (Bade, 6/27)

The Hill: Lawmaker Loses \$17M On Pharma Stock Pitched To Colleagues
A Republican congressman lost close to \$17 million on Tuesday when stock in an Australian pharmaceutical company he allegedly promoted to other lawmakers plunged to pennies per share. Shares of Innate Immunotherapeutics fell more than 90 percent in Sydney after a multiple sclerosis drug being tested by the pharma company showed no signs of working. (Lane and Wong, 6/27)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

18. The Opioid Epidemic Will Get Worse Before It Gets Better, Experts Warn

Stat talks with leading public health experts about the crisis and where it's headed.

Stat: Stat Forecast: Opioids Could Kill Nearly 500,000 In U.S. In Next Decade
Opioids could kill nearly half a million people across America over the next decade as the crisis of addiction and overdose accelerates. Deaths from opioids have been rising sharply for years, and drug overdoses already kill more Americans under age 50 than anything else. STAT asked leading public health experts at 10 universities to forecast the arc of the epidemic over the next decade. The consensus: It will get worse before it gets better. (Blau, 6/27)

Stat: The Game Changers: 12 Bold Attempts To Slow The Opioid Epidemic
The spiral of opioid addictions and overdoses is unrelenting. But there are bright spots all across the country: Men and women working in classrooms and courtrooms, in private labs and public offices, in clinics and on the street — all trying to find the next big way to save lives. STAT has identified 12 potential game changers that could begin to bend the curve of the opioid epidemic. Some of these are experimental ideas, not yet subjected to rigorous clinical trials or peer review. But they're intriguing enough that public health experts and addiction counselors are eager to learn more. (Blau, 6/27)

In other news on the epidemic —

ProPublica: The Last Shot

Initiated in the 1980s and until recently a small slice of the criminal justice system, drug courts now number more than 3,000, a sprawling network that touches half the counties

in the country. ... Over the past five years, Alkermes has persuaded hundreds of them to favor Vivitrol injections. (MacGillis, 6/27)

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Stat: White House Opioid Crisis Panel Misses Due Date For Preliminary Report
President Trump's commission on the opioid crisis has missed its first deadline. The newly created panel met for the first time on June 16, just 11 days before the White House's ambitious due date for a preliminary report meant to outline federal strategies to curb the epidemic. An executive order that established the commission had set a 90-day deadline for the completion of that document. The deadline will come and go without a report being filed, and a commission teleconference originally scheduled for Monday evening has been rescheduled for July 17. (Facher, 6/27)

The Philadelphia Inquirer/Philly.com: Opioid-Related Hospitalizations Soar In Pennsylvania

Hospital admissions for heroin overdoses have more than quadrupled since 2010 in Pennsylvania, with the upward trend getting even steeper in the past year, according to a new report that confirmed medical centers are seeing the same distressing patterns as coroners' offices. The vast majority of the hospitalized patients last year — about 70 percent — were between 20 and 39 years old, with an average age of 33. But 2 percent of patients were ages 15 to 19. (Sapatkin, 6/28)

Atlanta Journal-Constitution: Narcan May Not Be Enough For Deadly Strains Of Fentanyl

Two new strains of fentanyl are so deadly, they may be immune to naloxone, also known as Narcan, the drug used to save those who have overdosed, the GBI said Tuesday in a news release. Acrylfentanyl and tetrahydrofuran fentanyl were not identified by the GBI until March, when the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office submitted the drugs as part of forensic evidence. (Habersham, 6/27)

Atlanta Journal-Constitution: 'Drug Traffickers Dressed In White Lab Coats' Jailed For Pill Mills

A pain clinic owner, an office manager and two doctors pleaded guilty and were sentenced this month for their roles in operating "pill mills" — years after federal agents raided three metro Atlanta clinics. ... Prosecutors in the case said the doctors knew, or should have known, that patients were misusing their prescriptions. (Godwin, 6/27)

The Baltimore Sun: Baltimore Spending Panel Expected To Approve Lease For Drug Treatment Center

Baltimore officials are expected to approve a 15-year lease at the old Hebrew Orphan

Asylum in West Baltimore, where they plan to open a center to help people addicted to heroin and other drugs so they're not taking up emergency room beds. The stabilization or sobering center at 2700 Rayner Ave. in Mosher would serve around 30 patients at a time, helping them sober up safely and then connecting them with long-term drug treatment and other social services. (Duncan, 6/27)

19. Despite Trump's Apparent Olive Branch, HIV Advocates Remain Frustrated By Administration

On National HIV Testing Day, the president released a statement urging Americans get tested and fight the virus. But advocates say it's not enough. In other public health news: Lyme disease, breast-feeding and diabetes treatment.

The Washington Post: President Trump Wants You To Know He Actually Does Care About HIV/AIDS

The White House has issued an earnest statement attributed to President Trump about HIV/AIDS in America. It is technically accurate, apolitical and strikes just the right notes in terms of being somber and optimistic at the same time. There's nothing exciting about the content of the four-paragraph statement. It simply reminds people that today is National HIV Testing Day, reviews some statistics about the epidemic and tells people why it's important to get tested. (Cha, 6/27)

Stat: Lyme Disease Tests Can Miss Early Cases, But A New Approach Has Promise
{Every} year, some 300,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with Lyme disease, according to the CDC, and that number is on the rise. Some people wait months or years to get a correct Lyme diagnosis. And their cases highlight a problem: tests for Lyme in the first month of infection are frequently wrong. When diagnosed and treated early the infection is a simple one to get rid of, but left untreated it can cause a myriad of lingering symptoms, from severe arthritis to short-term memory problems. Now, a number of research groups are working to improve Lyme tests to catch infections in the early stages. One avenue being studied by the CDC aims to create a Lyme "signature" of small molecules in the blood — an approach that, in early testing, catches a dramatically higher share of early infections. (Caruso, 6/28)

NPR: Tips For Making Breast-Feeding Easier

There's a big push in the U.S. from pediatricians to have mothers of newborns breast-feed exclusively for at least six months. And many new moms want to. But only about 60 percent who start off breast-feeding keep it up for six months or more, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (Douceff, 6/27)

Kaiser Health News: Hospitals Ramp Up Hyperbaric Therapy For Diabetics, Despite Concerns

The Villages Regional Hospital did not sweat its decision to add hyperbaric oxygen therapy in 2013. Hyperbaric treatment, increasingly given to diabetics — many of them elderly with persistent wounds — involves breathing pure oxygen inside a pressurized air chamber typically for two hours each weekday, often for more than a month. Twenty outpatient sessions can bring a hospital \$9,000 in revenue. (Galewitz, 6/28)

STATE WATCH

20. More Than 100 Patients Ended Lives Under California's New Aid-In-Dying Law Last Year

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The majority, or 58.6 percent, of those who sought the drugs suffered from cancer.

The Associated Press: State: 111 Terminally Ill End Lives Under New California Law
California health officials reported Tuesday that 111 terminally ill people took drugs to end their lives in the first six months after a 2016 law made the option legal in the nation's most populous state. The data was part of the California Department of Public Health's first report on the law since it went into effect June 9, 2016. (6/27)

Los Angeles Times: 111 Terminally Ill Patients Took Their Own Lives In First 6 Months Of California Right-To-Die Law

A snapshot of the patients who took advantage of the law mirrors what's been seen in Oregon, which was the first state to legalize the practice nearly two decades ago. Though California is far more diverse than Oregon, the majority of those who have died under aid-in-dying laws in both states were white, college-educated cancer patients older than 60. The End of Life Option Act made California the fifth state in the nation to allow patients with less than six months to live to request end-of-life drugs from their doctors. (Karlman, 6/27)

Sacramento Bee: 111 Californians Use Aid In Dying Law In First Year

California's End of Life Option Act went into effect June 9, 2016, allowing assisted suicide in the state after years of contentious debate. Each year, on or before July 1, the Department of Public Health must provide prescribed information on those who sought and used aid-in-dying drugs. (Anderson, 6/27)

21. State Highlights: Ala.'s Psychiatric Care Of Inmates Cruel And Unusual, Judge Rules; Suit Filed Against La. Abortion Regulation

Media outlets report on news from Alabama, Louisiana, Missouri, Texas, California and Kansas.

The Associated Press: Judge: Alabama Inmates' Mental Care 'Horrendously' Lacking
Alabama's psychiatric care of state inmates is so "horrendously inadequate" that it violates the U.S. Constitution's ban on cruel and unusual punishment, a federal judge ruled Tuesday as he ordered the state to overhaul conditions. (6/27)

The Associated Press: State: Lawyers Sure Abortion Licensing Laws Constitutional
After court victories against abortion laws in Texas and Louisiana, a reproductive rights group filed a federal challenge on Tuesday of a Louisiana licensing law it blames for more than a thousand burdensome anti-abortion regulations. (6/27)

The Star Tribune: St. Louis Park Poised To Become 2nd City In State To Raise Tobacco Sales Age To 21

St. Louis Park is poised to become the second city in Minnesota to raise the tobacco sales age from 18 to 21, following the footsteps of neighboring suburb Edina. The City Council on Monday passed a first reading of an ordinance raising the sales age. If the second reading is approved July 17, the new restrictions would go into effect on Oct. 1. (Otarola, 6/27)

St. Louis Public Radio: Cancer-Coaching Grandmothers In St. Louis Are Saving Lives, One By One

The program is run by The Breakfast Club, a local nonprofit that supports African-American women diagnosed with breast cancer. The "buddies" receive a small stipend to be a mentor, friend and guide to women undergoing nine months of treatment and follow-up care. (Bouscaren, 6/28)

Houston Chronicle: Memorial Hermann Lays Off 350 More Employees

The Memorial Hermann Health System, Houston's largest employer, is laying off another 350 employees, bringing its total to more than 460 this year. Memorial Hermann announced the layoffs Tuesday, the same day it notified most of the affected employees. The reduction, which represents less than 2 percent of Memorial Hermann's 25,000 employees workforce, affected people at all levels. (Ackerman, 6/27)

San Jose Mercury News: Main Ingredient In Roundup Draws Scrutiny From California Lawmakers

Glyphosate, the main pesticide in Monsanto's Roundup weed killer that is used throughout Santa Cruz County, is receiving increased attention from state lawmakers concerned about its cancer-causing properties. In March, California became the first state to add glyphosate to the list of chemicals known to cause cancer. (Men, 6/27)

KCUR: Osteopathic Medicine, Born In Missouri, Now Seeks To Fill Rural Health Care Gaps

Osteopathic medical schools, whose numbers have doubled in the last 10 years, are in the middle of a huge push into smaller communities...These days, the care provided by D.O.s and M.D.s is typically so similar that most patients wouldn't know the difference. But that hasn't always been the case. At the root of osteopathic medicine is osteopathic manipulative treatment, a hands-on technique that looks like a cross between chiropractic manipulation and massage. There's evidence this can help treat some kinds of pain. (Smith, 6/28)

San Francisco Chronicle: Old-School Shelters Need To Upgrade Services

Unlike old-school shelters, the Navigation Center offers 24-hour access, has storage for belongings, partners are allowed to sleep together, and pets may be brought inside. The big difference? The Navigation Center has case managers offering intensive help on a range of services, including treating addictions, obtaining identification cards and finding housing. (Knight, 6/27)

New Orleans Times-Picayune: Flight Lands At Armstrong Airport After Woman Gives Birth On Board Plane

Thousands of feet above the Gulf of Mexico, Cristina Penton realized her baby boy was coming sooner rather than later. Penton said she began feeling contractions less than 20 minutes after she took off aboard Spirit Airlines Flight 971 from Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. on Saturday night. Within the hour, the flight had landed at Louis Armstrong International Airport, with Penton holding her newborn son in her arms. Once she knew something was wrong, Penton alerted flight attendants who found a pediatrician and a nurse on board and prepared to give an all-natural birth in the front row of the plane. Pilots re-routed the plane to New Orleans, but Penton's water broke in flight. Ten minutes later, Christoph Carsten Lezcano was born aboard the aircraft, 19 1/2 inches long and weighing seven pounds. (Rand, 6/27)

San Francisco Chronicle: Women Gain Force In Speaking Up On Sex Abuse, Discrimination

They had the numbers: six women who would describe in disturbing detail exactly how they were harassed, assaulted or made to feel uneasy by the unwanted advances of San Francisco venture capitalist Justin Caldbeck. Three of those women decided to identify themselves publicly — a risky move for victims of sexual violence or

harassment, who are often dismissed, threatened or discredited in efforts to poke holes in their stories. (Lang, 6/27)

St. Louis Public Radio: Marijuana Isn't A Medical Treatment Or Moneymaker For Missouri, But That Could Change After 2018

In Missouri, there are at least 22 ballot proposals aimed at persuading voters in 2018 to join that growing club of pro-pot states, an effort similar to a successful ballot drive last year in Arkansas. But all of this comes as U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions is calling for a crackdown on the growing number of states that appear to be ignoring the federal ban on pot. (Mannies, 6/27)

PRESCRIPTION DRUG WATCH

22. That Scary, Long List Of Side Effects In Drug Ads? It May Not Be Long For This World

News outlets report on stories related to pharmaceutical pricing.

Stat: Could You Do With Fewer Side Effects On Drug Ads? You May Soon Be In Luck
But now, the Food and Drug Administration is considering whether bombarding consumers with every last potential side effect might be overkill. The agency, which approves prescription drugs and oversees how they're marketed, is proposing a new study to look at whether patients are being "over-warned" to the point that they stop paying attention...The United States and New Zealand are the only two countries to allow direct-to-consumer ads on TV. It's big business: Drug companies spend about \$5 billion a year on advertising, and a huge chunk of that is on TV. But federal officials strictly scrutinize those ads to make sure they strike a "fair balance" between the benefits of the drug and the side effects. (Thielking, 6/28)

The New York Times: Insurers Battle Families Over Costly Drug For Fatal Disease
Nolan and Jack Willis, twins from upstate New York, and just 10 other boys took part in a clinical trial that led to the approval last fall of the very first drug to treat their rare, deadly muscle disease. Now the Willis boys are again test cases as a different type of medical question comes to the fore: whether insurers will cover the controversial drug, Exondys 51, which can cost more than \$1 million a year even though it's still unclear if it works. (Thomas, 6/22)

Stat: Democrats Lose Patience With Trump On Drug Pricing

President Trump spent the last several weeks blasting Democrats for refusing to work with Republicans on health care. Now, two of the Democrats who have shown the most

willingness to work with him on one specific health issue — drug pricing — are blasting him back. Reps. Peter Welch of Vermont and Elijah Cummings of Maryland made headlines when they agreed to meet Trump at the White House in March to discuss efforts to bring down drug prices, even as many of their colleagues worked to distance themselves from the president. The pair came away from that meeting optimistic about Trump's willingness to press for relatively liberal changes, like allowing the importation of drugs from Canada or letting Medicare negotiate drug prices. (Mershon, 6/23)

Stat: Lawmakers Chide Trump For Seeking To 'Scale Back' Hospital Discount Drug Program

Several items in a draft version of a White House executive order on drug pricing are causing consternation, but some Democratic lawmakers are especially upset the Trump administration seeks to weaken a program that offers discounts on medicines to hospitals. The 340B Drug Discount Program, as it is known, requires drug makers to offer discounts of up to 50 percent on all outpatient drugs — for everything from AIDS to diabetes — to hospitals and clinics that serve indigent populations. (Silverman, 6/23)

PBS NewsHour: How Will The Pharmaceutical Industry Evolve On Drug Pricing?

High drug prices are a constant consumer complaint about health care. Judy Woodruff sits down with Stephen Uhl, president and CEO of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, at the Spotlight Health Conference at the Aspen Institute to discuss the Senate Republican health care bill, the prospects for lowering drug prices and the connection between the opioid crisis and the industry. (6/23)

Business Insider: FDA List Of Drugs Without Generic Competition To Prevent Price Gouging

The FDA just took a step that could increase competition and prevent price gouging on drugs that seemingly jump in price overnight. In May, Food and Drug Administration commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said he wanted to make it more difficult for drugs that are off patent to jack up the price of the medication because they don't face any competition. The biggest example of this was Daraprim, a decades-old drug that then-Turing CEO Martin Shkreli increased in price from \$13.50 to \$750 a pill. To keep that from happening in the future, the FDA on Tuesday published a list of more than 200 drugs that have fallen off patent where the FDA hasn't received any applications for a generic drug version of that drug. (Ramsey, 6/27)

Stat: FDA To Study Whether Enough Doctors Understand Claims In Ads For Cancer Drugs

A year ago, a widower caused a stir by writing in an opinion piece that advertising for a Bristol-Myers Squibb cancer drug was "misleading and exploitive." His wife had recently passed away from lung cancer after being treated with the company's Opdivo medicine,

and he argued that Opdivo ads overstated the chances of living longer. Concerns about drug advertising are hardly new, but his op-ed, which appeared in The New York Times, triggered a fresh round of debate. Why? Opdivo is one of the new so-called immunotherapies, which harness the body's own immune system to attack tumors. And they are transforming cancer care, raising expectations among investors, doctors and, especially, patients. (Silverman, 6/23)

Columbus Dispatch: The Daily Briefing: GOP Health Bill Gives Drugmakers \$25.7 Billion Tax Break

Among many things the Senate bill would do is roll back a tax increase agreed to by the pharmaceutical industry at the time Obamacare was approved with the understanding that health-care coverage, and thus expenditures for drugs, would increase. The Congressional Budget Office, in estimating the financial impact of the latest bill, said the resulting tax break for pharmaceuticals over a decade would be \$25.7 billion. (Johnson, 6/27)

Bloomberg: Biotech Stock Rally May Have Legs

From 2010 to mid-2015, drug stocks soared to record heights on the back of massive mergers and seemingly boundless optimism. Then, throughout the 2016 election campaign, worries about political pressure to lower drug prices put biotech stocks in a prolonged slump. (Nisen, 6/22)

Stat: This Investor Predicted The Big Biotech Stock Rally. And He Thinks It Has Legs
If you've been following all things biotech, you know this has been a very good week for the industry. Stocks are up sharply across the board. Indeed, the sector is enjoying its best run of the year. In the past week, six of the 10 top performers in the S&P Healthcare Index were large-cap biotech stocks. Shares of Celgene (up 10 percent), Regeneron Pharmaceuticals (up 11 percent) and Vertex (up 8 percent) have all reached new highs: Biogen is up 9 percent, too. (Feurstein, 6/22)

Bloomberg: Shkreli's Jury Pool Calls Him 'An Evil Man' And 'A Snake'

Martin Shkreli is infamous. That's making it tough to find a jury of 12 for his criminal fraud trial in Brooklyn, where he's even being blamed for other pharma executives' bad behavior, such as raising the price of the life-saving EpiPen. The first potential juror interviewed Monday, a young woman in her 30s, called Shkreli "an evil man." Another woman said she knew he'd been labeled "the most hated man in America," while a third woman declared, "I looked right at him and, in my head, I said 'that's a snake.'" They were among at least a dozen people dismissed from jury service because of their strong opinions about Shkreli and at least three potential jurors blamed him for a spike in the price of the EpiPen. (Hurtado and Egkolfopoulou, 6/26)

The Washington Post: 'Pharma Bro' 9 Martin Shkreli Goes On Trial, Where He Finds Another Kind Of Limelight

Martin Shkreli got his first taste of Wall Street as an intern for a hedge fund firm started by CNBC personality Jim Cramer. After striking out on his own, he developed a reputation for aggressive tactics, including betting a company's stock price would fall and then berating its executives on social media. His battles earned him a spot on Forbes list of "30 under 30" after, the magazine said, Shkreli torpedoed a health care industry merger and "antagonized" pharmaceutical giant Pfizer into removing its former chief executive from the company's board of directors. Shkreli, now 34, is a "boy genius," his attorney has said. (Merle, 6/27)

The Wall Street Journal: Novo Nordisk Wagers Sales Growth Will Offset Price Cuts In China

Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk A/S is betting that wider uptake of its products in China will offset price reductions required by the Chinese government. Chinese regulators will soon decide whether to include two of Novo Nordisk's newer medications — Victoza, used to treat Type 2 diabetes, and NovoSeven, a hemophilia treatment — on the country's reimbursement drug list. The state-funded program reimburses Chinese patients part or all of the drug's price, depending on its classification. (Trentmann, 6/27)

Stat: More Lawmakers Want The Army To Hold A Hearing On Zika Vaccine Pricing
A half dozen U.S. senators want the U.S. Army to hold a public hearing to explore the controversy over the pricing of a Zika virus vaccine that Sanofi is developing with taxpayer dollars. In a letter sent on Monday to Acting U.S. Secretary of the Army Robert Speer, the lawmakers expressed concerns that a vaccine would not be "accessible and affordable" for many Americans, since the company may win an exclusive license to develop the technology and have "monopolistic" rights through 2036. (Silverman, 6/26)

Reuters: EU Tests Limits Of Drug Pricing Freedom In Landmark Probe

The first ever EU antitrust probe into excessive drug pricing is taking the European pharmaceuticals industry into uncharted territory, unnerving some companies and lawyers worried about the reach of market intervention. It comes as drugmakers face global pressure over the high cost of prescription medicines, with particular anger focused on makers of older generic products who exploit limited competition to force through big price rises. (Chee and Hirschler, 6/26)

Stat: Pharma's New Justification For High Drug Prices Makes The Rounds

The festivities are over here at BIO 2017, but it's been a busy week at the drug industry's big annual networking conference. It's been telling, too, of what biotech

leaders see as their industry's biggest opportunities, priorities, and problems. Here are our takeaways from four days of talking and listening to executives here. (Robbins and Garde, 6/23)

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23. Perspectives: A Drug Seen As Epitome Of Personalized Medicine Was Just Approved By FDA

Read recent commentaries about drug-cost issues.

Stat: Landmark FDA Approval Bolsters Personalized Medicine

Our understanding of cancer has been morphing from a tissue-specific disease — think lung cancer or breast cancer — to a disease characterized more by specific genes or biomarkers than by location. A recent FDA decision underscores that transition and further opens the door to personalized medicine. (Edward Abrahams, 6/21)

Morning Consult: Minority Communities Need Better Health Care, Not Counterfeit Drugs

According to the most recent report by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Latinos and African-Americans have health outcomes that are 30 to 40 percent poorer than white Americans. ... That's why policymaking in the health care sphere has to move in a direction that closes this health outcomes gap, and takes great care not to make these disparities even worse. ... We could take giant steps backward, however, if Congress moves ahead with the idea of permitting the importation of prescription medicines from other countries. If this happens, the United States government will actually be promoting the use of counterfeit and unsafe medications from China, Mexico, Pakistan and other parts of the world in which our Food and Drug Administration has zero oversight. (Garfield Clunie and Richard Williams, 6/23)

CNN: Why US Health Care Costs Defy Common Sense

When Jeffrey Kivi's rheumatologist changed affiliations from one hospital in New York City to another, less than 20 blocks uptown, the price his insurer paid for the outpatient infusion he got about every 6 weeks to control his arthritis jumped from \$19,000 to over \$100,000. Same drug; same dose -- though, Kivi noted, the pricier infusion room had free cookies, Wi-Fi and bottled water. (Elisabeth Rosenthal, 6/26)

Crain's Chicago Business: President Donald Trump And Prescription Drug Pricing

We are all focused on Republican efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with new policies that will result in millions of Americans paying more and getting less.

But there is another health care issue that also needs attention: the future of prescription drug prices. (Jan Schakowsky, 6/26)

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The Star-Ledger: Don't Just Cap Costs For Cancer Patients; Put The Squeeze On Big Pharma

A proposal to cap the out-of-pocket cost of drugs, which just passed the state Senate unanimously, sounds like a Godsend for patients. If you've got a rare form of leukemia or HIV/AIDS and need a specialty drug that costs tens of thousands of dollars, it can be. (6/27)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

24. Parsing The Politics: Mitch McConnell's 'Misery'; Is It Time 'Tear Up' The Bill And 'Start Over'?

Editorial pages examine the political dynamics at work behind the Senate GOP's now delayed effort to bring a health bill up for a vote.

The Washington Post: The Health-Care Debate We're Missing Amid All Those Memes
The Senate health-care bill, which was scuttled Tuesday until after July 4, was doomed by two narratives: Republicans are mean, and poor people would be dropping like flies. Assisting the opposition was none other than President Trump, who called the earlier version passed by the House "mean." Trump met with Senate Republicans on Tuesday afternoon to plot their move to repeal and replace Obamacare, which remains the GOP's objective. (Kathleen Parker, 6/27)

The New York Times: The Misery Of Mitch McConnell

For a good laugh, or rather cry, zip backward to the beginning of 2014, when Democrats still had control of the Senate, and listen to Mitch McConnell's lamentations about the way they were doing business. "Major legislation is now routinely drafted not in committee but in the majority leader's conference room," he declaimed on the Senate floor. "Bills should go through committee." He pledged that if Republicans were "fortunate enough to gain the majority next year, they would." (Frank Bruni, 6/28)

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The New York Times: The Health Care Hoax Has Been Exposed, Senator McConnell
Senator Mitch McConnell hoped that keeping his wretched bill to destroy the Affordable Care Act secret until the last minute would make it easier for him to railroad fellow

Republicans. The facts the majority leader had hoped to suppress came back to bite him on Monday when the Congressional Budget Office released a detailed review of the bill that confirmed what governors, doctors and indeed the American public had been saying for days: The bill is a cruel hoax that would help the wealthiest Americans at the expense of the poorest. (6/27)

The Wall Street Journal: Tear Up The GOP Health Bill And Start Over
The fate of the Affordable Care Act may be determined this week, and no one can claim ignorance of the stakes. Republican leaders in the Senate drafted their proposed replacement, the Better Care Reconciliation Act, behind closed doors without hearings or committee consideration. But the Congressional has pierced the Orwellian packaging to make clear the consequences of the coming vote. Senators cannot say they weren't warned, and neither can the American people. (William A. Galston, 6/27)

The Washington Post: Why 'Repeal And Replace' Will Become 'Tweak And Move On'
Two Junes ago, when the Supreme Court upheld, 6 to 3, a challenged provision of the Affordable Care Act, Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., writing for the majority, vented: "Congress wrote key parts of the Act behind closed doors. . . . Congress passed much of the Act using a complicated budgetary procedure known as 'reconciliation,' which limited opportunities for debate and amendment, and bypassed the Senate's normal 60-vote filibuster requirement. . . . As a result, the Act does not reflect the type of care and deliberation that one might expect of such significant legislation." Now, however, Republicans run things, so . . . (George F. Will, 6/27)

The Washington Post: Why The Senate's Health-Care Plan Wouldn't Work In The Real World
Monday's report on the Senate health-care bill from the Congressional Budget Office said that 22 million people would lose coverage under the plan and that coverage in the non-group market would become far stingier than it is today. By Tuesday the bill had been pulled back for revision. The quick sequence was revealing: Senators clearly could use some extra time to figure out how to bridge a giant gap between policy theory and reality. (Drew Altman, 6/27)

Los Angeles Times: Is Mitch McConnell Trying To Tank Trumpcare?
That sounds unlikely, I know. McConnell prides himself on his prowess as a legislative strategist; he likes nothing better than crushing his opponents. Repealing Obamacare was one of the GOP's core promises in 2016, and most conservatives (including McConnell, presumably) still believe in the cause. Equally important, McConnell and House Speaker Paul Ryan desperately wanted to pass a healthcare bill with a big tax

cut at its center. That's the core of the Republican economic agenda. (Doyle McManus, 6/28)

Chicago Tribune: What Republicans Love About Their Health Care Plan Has Nothing To Do With Health Care

Deemocrats these days must feel like Michael Dukakis, as famously played by Jon Lovitz in a debate with then-Vice President George H.W. Bush on "Saturday Night Live," when he said, "I can't believe I'm losing to this guy." Less than a week after losing four special elections they thought they could win, based on President Donald Trump's plunging approvals with swing voters, Democrats face a new Senate Republican bill to replace the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. (Clarence Page, 6/27)

The Wall Street Journal: The GOP's Schumer Option

Senate Republicans on Tuesday delayed a vote on their health-care bill until after the July 4 recess, and the timidity and opportunism of too many Senators suggest they may never get 50 GOP votes. We hope they understand that if they fail, Republicans will be entrusting their political health-care future to the brutal generosity of Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer. (6/27)

25. Detailing The Harms: The Senate Plan's Victims; What About Kindness?

Topping opinion writers' list of harms is the 22 million people who would lose their insurance coverage, but they don't stop there.

Lexington Herald Leader: McConnell Health-Care Bill Is Kind To A Very Few

The massive redistribution of wealth from poor to rich that's masquerading as a health-care bill in the U.S. Senate is even more cruel in some ways than the bill that cleared the House and that President Donald Trump later called "mean." Under the bill that Majority Leader Mitch McConnell wants to whisk into law, 22 million Americans would lose their health insurance by 2026 while out-of-pocket costs would rise for the insured, according to an analysis by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. Recall that Trump promised no one would lose insurance and that coverage would be better if he became president. (6/28)

Reuters: The Biggest Victims Of The Senate Health Bill (and Other Trump Plans)

Donald Trump asked Senate Republicans to introduce a healthcare bill with "more heart." They didn't. The senators' draft legislation, introduced last Thursday, will strip tens of millions of low-income and middle-class Americans of their health insurance.

Millions more will face higher costs for lower coverage. The Congressional Budget office estimates 22 million more people will likely be uninsured by 2026 than would be if the Affordable Care Act remained law. (Judy Lubin, 6/28)

Miami Herald: 'Sorry Your Son's Real Sick But ... Tough'

For example, Vice President Mike Pence touted this as a new system based on "personal responsibility." He did not specify what failure of "personal responsibility" he finds in people with disabilities who won't be able to get treatment under the Republican plan. Kellyanne Conway opined that those who lose their Medicaid "can always get jobs." Which will doubtless surprise many low-income workers who depend on it. They thought they already had jobs, albeit jobs that don't offer health insurance. A woman on Twitter asked what will happen to her son "born at 26 weeks with a serious heart condition." Another woman replied: "Sorry about your son, but what would he have done 200 years ago things are much better but nothing is promised to anyone." (Leonard Pitts Jr., 6/27)

Richmond Times-Dispatch: About Those 22 Million Who Would "Lose" Insurance
News outlets around the country led with a big number from the Congressional Budget Office's review of the Senate health care bill: Were it to pass, 22 million people could "lose" insurance, as many put it. (6/27)

The Des Moines Register: Why It's So Hard To Get At The Truth Of GOP Overhaul Of Health Law

It stands to reason that in an era of alternative facts and alt-right websites generating fake news, we're not getting the whole story on the U.S. Senate Republicans' bill to overhaul the Obama-era health care law. On Monday, Tom Ashbrook, the normally measured host of National Public Radio's "On Point," about lost it after failing to get his guests to simply agree what the bill would do. "It just stinks when Americans can't hear what is actually in this bill!" Ashbrook exclaimed. (Rekha Basu, 6/27)

Arizona Republic: Catholic Bishops Call Senate Health Plan 'Simply Unacceptable'

Yet another influential group heard from on the Senate's plan to cut health-insurance for the poor in order to offer tax cuts to the wealthy. This time, it's the nation's Catholic bishops, responding to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office report that 22 million Americans would no longer have insurance by 2026 -- either because they don't want it or their employer no longer offers it or they can't afford it. (Laurie Roberts, 6/27)

Cleveland Plain Dealer: GOP Obamacare Repeal Would Imperil Lives, Health Of LGBTQ And Other Vulnerable Groups

For millions of Americans across the country, the possible repeal of the Affordable Care

Act is a terrifying prospect. People are facing dire consequences if President Donald Trump succeeds in his quest to destroy health care to serve a political talking point, and the impact on LGBTQ people, communities of color, women, children, seniors and others disproportionately reliant on the ACA will be devastating. (Chad Griffin and William Hardy, 6/28)

The Charlotte Observer: If Thom Tillis Made \$40k A Year, What Would He Think Of The Republican Health Plan?

If you were Thom Tillis, but without his paycheck, would you think the Senate Republican health plan is a good idea? Let's say you were 60 years old, just four years older than Tillis, and from Mecklenburg County, as he is. If you made \$40,000 and purchased a Bronze plan on the Affordable Care Act exchange, you'd pay about \$1,100 in premiums after tax credits. Under the Republican health plan – the Better Care Reconciliation Act – you would pay \$5,420, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation analysis. That's an increase of 393 percent. (6/27)

26. In Defense Of The Senate GOP Plan: A Means To 'Better Health Care,' Pathway To Relief

News outlets feature the arguments in favor of the bill from prominent Republican leaders such as Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price.

Lexington Herald Leader: Senate Offers A Plan For Better Health Care

Too many families in Kentucky who liked their insurance plans or their doctors soon found they weren't able to keep them. When families are kicked off their plan, they must find a new insurer, often at a higher price. When families must change doctors, they often lose a bond of trust they developed with a physician who's familiar with their medical history. And when insurers flee the exchanges, it leaves families with fewer options for their health care. In fact, Kentuckians in nearly half of our counties now have only one option on the Obamacare exchanges — and, as we all know, one option isn't really an option at all. (Sen. Mitch McConnell, 6/27)

The Wall Street Journal: ObamaCare's Victims Need Relief Now

America faces an urgent crisis in its health-care system. Costs are skyrocketing and choices are disappearing on the individual and small-group markets. Many people now confront the real challenge of having no choice in their health coverage. (HHS Secretary Thomas E. Price, 6/27)

The Washington Post: The Senate Health-Care Bill Will Give Us Better Care And A Better Economy

The much-ballyhooed Senate Republicans= 2 health-care reform — officially the Better Care Reconciliation Act of 2017 and better known as Obamacare repeal-and-replace — is now the center of public debate. Much of the discussion has focused on issues of timing — the “secretive” process by which the bill was developed, the putative “jamming” of the bill forward for a floor vote and now a delay of the vote until after the July 4 recess. But to begin: What’s actually in the BCRA? (Douglas Holtz-Eakin, 6/27)

The Washington Post: Lawmakers Have A Rare Chance To Transform Medicaid. They Should Take It.

President Trump called on Congress earlier this year to give governors around the country “the resources and flexibility they need with Medicaid to make sure no one is left out.” As administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, I share the president’s vision: to ensure that Medicaid works for those it was designed to serve. (Seema Verma, 6/27)

Boston Globe: The Left’s Health Care Rhetoric Is Unhinged

In my view, the keening about how the GOP bills will strike people dead is sheer hysteria. Liberals always claim that if conservative policies prevail — on health care, on fossil fuels, on welfare reform, on abortion rights, on the Second Amendment, even on rent control 50 more people will die. (Jeff Jacoby, 6/27)

27. Thoughts On Medicaid: What To Do? Save It? Transform It? Protect Its Beneficiaries?

Opinion writers examine how plans to overhaul Medicaid impact those who rely on it -- especially vulnerable populations.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch: Saving Medicaid, Saving Our Future

The parents of a 3-year-old are silent as they sit in their pediatrician’s office in Potosi. They have just learned their son has leukemia. The treatment will be long and hard, but at least it is a type of leukemia that usually has a good outcome. Yet they are also frightened because, between the two of them, they are working five part-time jobs just to keep their family’s heads above water. So they are relieved to hear that Medicaid will cover the bulk of the enormous cost of their child’s treatments. (Robert W. Wilmott and Gary A. Silverman, 6/27)

Bloomberg: Senate's Health Bill's Pain Doesn't End At Medicaid

The AHCA has less-generous tax credits tied only to age. The BCRA, meanwhile, keeps the basic ACA structure, which makes it seem friendlier to patients and to health-care providers. But a closer look reveals warts. In 2020, the income range for tax

credits shifts down to 0 to 350 percent of the poverty level. That may help low-income people in states that didn't take the ACA's Medicaid expansion. That's arguably a positive for hospitals and insurers. But other aspects of BCRA erase that benefit. Cost-sharing subsidies will end in 2019. And tax credits will be far less generous. (Max Nisen, 6/27)

Detroit Free Press: Why Health Care Bills Leave Poor, Sick Behind

In many ways, calling the U.S. House of Representatives' passed American Health Care Act (AHCA) or the Senate-proposed Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA) a "repeal and replacement" of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is a misnomer. Neither bill fully repeals the ACA nor do their changes focus solely on replacing the ACA's key provisions. At the most fundamental level, both bills have different goals than the Affordable Care Act. (Marianne Udow-Phillips, 6/27)

Los Angeles Times: The GOP Healthcare Plan Will Devastate Los Angeles

Congressional Republican proposals to "repeal and replace" Obamacare would slash Medicaid, the nation's health insurance program for the poor. In so doing, they would devastate Los Angeles in ways that may not yet be fully appreciated. One in 20 of the nation's Medicaid recipients lives in L.A. County and relies on the program for their healthcare. About 4 million strong, they make up about 40% of the county's population. Many would be at grave risk of losing their health coverage, and consequently all but emergency medical treatment, under the Republicans' program. Current programs to provide housing and treatment to thousands of people living on the streets, or heading there after their discharge from hospitals or release from jails and prisons, would be seriously curtailed. (6/27)

The Wall Street Journal: Health Bill Draws Fiscal Fault Line Between Old And Poor—And The Poor Are Losing

The health-care overhaul that Senate leaders floated this past week does more than roll back an entitlement Republicans have loathed since the day it was enacted in 2010. It portends a deeper struggle over the safety net that pits the elderly against the poor. The federal government is often called an insurance company with an army. Thanks to aging and health-care inflation, the cost of that insurance is rising relentlessly. Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid now swallow 58% of tax revenue, and are on track to take 80% by 2047. (Greg Ip, 6/28)

The Des Moines Register: Allow Iowans To Buy Into Medicaid

You can see the train wreck coming. Iowans who do not receive health insurance through an employer may not be able to buy it next year on a state-based exchange created by Obamacare. Only one insurer has applied to offer individual coverage here in 2018. That company, Medica, is proposing steep rate increases and may still pull out

of the market. Iowans cannot purchase insurance if no one will sell it to them. What are they going to do? (6/26)

28. The Intersection Of Health Policy And Politics: Seeking A Path To Single-Payer; Searching For Freedom From Obamacare's Regulations

Editorial and opinion writers offer their views on health policy buzz words like single-payer, public option and even regulatory relief.

Bloomberg: California's Health-Care Example For Washington

As Republicans in Washington contemplate the uncertain fate of their health-care bill over the July 4 recess, they might consider recent events in another legislature on the opposite coast of America. Earlier this month, Democrats in the California state senate passed their own big, bold, bad health-care bill. The legislation would have required the state government to supplant insurers, providing health insurance to all residents and negotiating medical costs with hospitals, doctors and other providers. (6/27)

Los Angeles Times: If There's A Smart Path To Single Payer Healthcare In California, We Haven't Found It Yet

California Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon did the state a favor late Friday afternoon when he slammed the brakes on a fast-moving Senate bill to create a single-payer healthcare system in California. As should be obvious from the flailing Republican efforts in Washington, it's easy to talk about drastic changes in the way healthcare is financed, but hard to make those changes work without hurting many of the people you're trying to help. (6/27)

Cincinnati Enquirer: Public Option Would Ensure Ohioans Access To Affordable Care
If expanding access to health care is more important than lining the pockets of special interests and giving tax breaks to billionaires, we can make it a reality. We just need to demand the politicians we elect to represent us, get the message. (Connie Pillich, 6/27)

Los Angeles Times: Will The Republican Healthcare Bill Make Us More Free?

The central theme of the Republican campaign to repeal the Affordable Care Act has been freedom: freedom from Obamacare's onerous regulations, freedom from overpriced insurance and most of all, freedom from the tyrannical individual mandate. The Senate has now released its long-awaited alternative to Obama-era health reform. Although the Better Care Reconciliation Act is embattled, there's still a decent chance that the Senate will pass it. If it does, the bill is likely to become law. (Nicholas Bagley, 6/28)

29. Viewpoints: Drug Testing In Wisconsin; The Ethics Of Discussing Abortion

A selection of opinions on health care from around the country.

The New York Times: Why We Shouldn't Drug Test Poor People

The Senate Republicans' stalled effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act is not the only profound threat to our health care system. If Gov. Scott Walker gets his wish, Wisconsin will be the first state that requires adults without children to undergo drug testing if they want to receive Medicaid. Other states could follow his plan. (Jamila Michener and Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, 6/28)

USA Today: The Lies About Abortion Must Stop. Here's What We're Doing About That. Imagine going to your doctor about one of the most important decisions you'll ever make. Imagine your doctor's response is to lie to you. You'd rightly wonder why you're not being told the truth and whether this dishonesty violates some law, let alone the ethical and moral duty to provide health care according to a doctor's own best medical judgement. (Nancy Northup, 6/28)

Bloomberg: What Jeff Sessions Gets Wrong About Marijuana

Drug abuse is devastating American society. Opioid overdose alone killed more than 33,000 people in 2015. But rather than address this public-health crisis, Attorney General Jeff Sessions has declared a new war on drugs. He has re-introduced mandatory minimum sentences for drug crimes and has asked Congress to let him spend money to prosecute people and businesses behaving in accordance with their states' medical marijuana laws. Clearly, Sessions is out of step with the scientific consensus regarding the medical effectiveness of cannabis. (Ashley C. Bradford and W. David Bradford, 6/27)

The Charlotte Observer: N.C. Cancer Patients' Lives Are At Stake If Senate Doesn't Act This Week

A cancer diagnosis is one of the most disrupting and frightening experiences a person can go through. I know because it happened to me just last year. I live with two forms of blood cancer – myelodysplastic syndrome and myelofibrosis. I am also one of the fortunate ones. Ongoing treatment has so far been successful in keeping the cancer in check, but I live with the reality that my body will stop responding so positively and I will need a new treatment game plan. (Stuart Behune, 6/27)

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TERM OF THE DAY

Debenture

A debenture is a type of debt instrument that is not secured by physical assets or collateral. Debentures are backed only by the general creditworthiness and reputation of the issuer. Both corporations and governments frequently issue this type of bond to secure capital. Like other types of bonds, debentures are documented in an indenture.

Breaking it Down:

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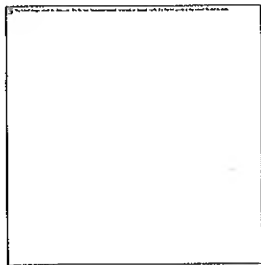
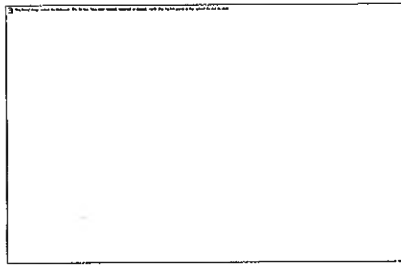
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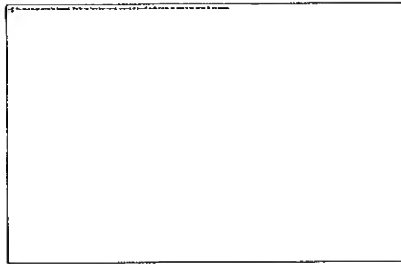
Convertible Debenture

A convertible debenture is an interest-bearing loan a company issues that can be turned into stock. [Read More](#)



Debentures

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Blunder #9: Buying Annuities

Billionaire money manager and best-selling author

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Convertible Hedge

A trading strategy that consists of a long position in a company's convertible bond or debenture, and a simultaneous short position in the underlying common shares. The convertible hedge strategy is designed to be market neutral, while generating a higher yield than would be obtained by merely holding the convertible bond or debenture alone. [Read More](#)

Agency Debentures

Debt issued by a federal agency or a government-sponsored enterprise (GSE) for financing purposes. These types of debentures are not backed by collateral, but by the integrity and credit worthiness of the

Hung Convertibles

Convertible securities that are very unlikely to be converted into common stock of the underlying issuer, usually because the share price is well below the conversion price. Hung convertibles can also result if the issuer is unable to force conversion until the underlying common stock reaches a pre-defined price level, or because the call date is still far away.

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Funded Debt

A company's debt, such as bonds, long-term notes payables or debentures that will mature in more than one year or one business cycle. This type of debt is

issuer. Officially, agency debentures issued by a Federal Agency, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, are backed by the full faith and credit of the United States government. [Read More](#)

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